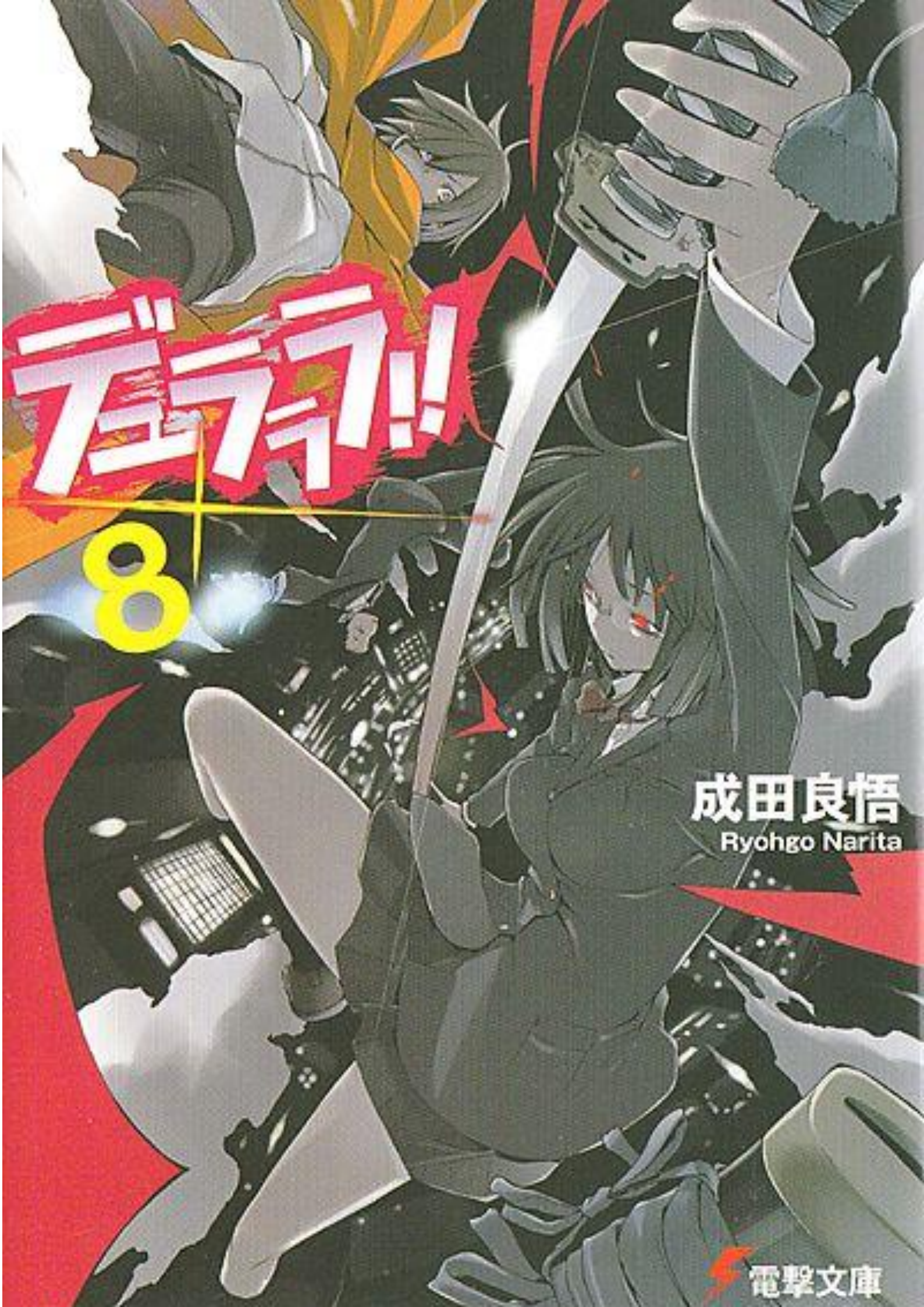

ダラダラ!!
8
成田良悟
Ryohgo Narita
電撃文庫

倉鼠「说起来，我也不太了解有关你的事情……
「西伯利亚」这个地方和对于日本的关系
还是日本呢？」
瓦罗兽「西伯利亚……正确的发音是Сибирь。
属于俄罗斯联邦管辖区，专指东乙区的地区
有这个含义。」
汤猫「喵，原似乎是关于原住民族关系的区别。」
瓦罗兽「还有，日本有些地名的由来有点令人在意呢「西伯利亚」
虽然关于这个名字的由来有各种各样的考究
但有一种说法是，这是将原住民语的发音写成「西伯利亚」
表记于西伯利亚的关于民族语，所以才这么命名。」
倉鼠「原来如此。」
瓦罗兽「……」……虽然不是完全，但对于食物
太过执着可是的。
能够作为会话的话题成为了还是很高兴的事情于我
但如果，很不好意思……」
倉鼠「就算这么说。」
瓦罗兽「咦？」
倉鼠「我也是这回事，虽然如此
那么今天就来这里结束吧？」
瓦罗兽「……多谢。」
汤猫「……关于原住民的事情，我，真不。」
瓦罗兽「……」……虽然不是完全，但对于食物
太过执着可是的。
能够作为会话的话题成为了还是很高兴的事情于我
但如果，很不好意思……」
倉鼠「就算这么说。」
瓦罗兽「咦？」
倉鼠「我也是这回事，虽然如此
那么今天就来这里结束吧？」
瓦罗兽「……多谢。」
汤猫「……关于原住民的事情，我，真不。」
瓦罗兽「西伯利亚的语源是来自于突厥语系的人们对于日本的称呼
之词，日本的原住民族语言参照系不同等级的区别，说起了
自己那样的文化，出现「长崎语」就是日本的人。
在俄罗斯，日本会给予最高评价，最初发现个别来
就来源于语源的事情。」
汤猫「……」
倉鼠「……最个，可爱的。」
瓦罗兽「怎么了？」
倉鼠「……等等不会，喵男他是怎了吧？」

プロローグ『表裏一体@IKEBUKURO』

# Prologue “An inside and outside of one body @ Ikebukuro”

Prologue

July, somewhere

Dollars have changed.

There are people at the café whispering this.

Not long ago, Dollars was a really loose kind of association, but now it’s acting more like a colour gang.

The turning point for this change was the dispute that broke out during Golden week.

2 months have already passed, but the scar that had been ripped open that time hasn’t yet healed.

“Hey, Mister, we don’t really understand the term ‘slow’, so we’ll just get down to the point.”

Nighttime in Tokyo.

In a small laneway not far from Tokyo’s city centre Ikebukuro, there were several young boys attired in loosely arranged school uniforms encircling an office worker.

The approximately 40-year-old man suddenly being surrounded by the young boys felt dizzy, it was like he was being abruptly thrown into an abyss.

“Wha… what is it, you guys, are you looking for people who did something wrong to you…. did I do something… wrong?”

Looking at the number of young boys that were around the same age as his son, the office worker was frightened to the point that he wanted to hug himself in security, but against the 4 people surrounding him, that action would obviously be useless.

“Didn’t I just say, we’re getting to the point! Ah! We’re Dollars, heard of it? Right now, we need to collect funds, would you help us out, contribute your money to us?”

One young boy said this while patting the man’s cheek, the drunk to sober old man immediately switched to a happy expression.

“Ah… haha, Dollars, I know it, I’m one as well.”

“Huh?”

“Look, look, online…”

The man said this while taking out his phone, but the young boy grabbed his hand, smiled then twisted it. The phone dropped to the ground, making a resounding noise.

“Ah… ah! It hurts…”

The man groaned. The young boy who was twisting the wrist brought his mouth close to the man’s ear, and began speaking with a repulsive expression.

“If it’s like that, then we’re Dollars partners and you should definitely give us your money, after all, you are our elder.”

The other young boys heard this and also called out.

“Fathers of Japan, we’re really hard up.”

“We’re really doing this for your own good.”

They made affectionate gestures, lightly hooking their hands around the man’s shoulder, but the man only got increasingly frightened, he even thought it would be better to hand over his money. As the matter stands, he’s afraid he won’t be able to run away.

The man peeked behind, determined to try his luck and run.

But wherever he looked there were several young boys blocking the lane at the back, he immediately felt hopeless.

Though— what the man didn’t know was he wasn’t the only one looking at the young boys blocking the lane with their unclear features.

“…...What are you guys doing?”

“What are you looking at, go away! Get lost!”

The blackmailing boys tried to look intimidating – but it was clear they weren’t having any effect on the people blocking the lane, a sense of urgency and hostility gradually flooded the air.

The young boys blocking the lane were of all different sizes, but wore the same mask.

It’s called a mask, but it was really very simple, just a piece of cloth shaped as a hat with holes to reveal the eyes, the hat wrapped around the entire head, and was shaped to look like shark’s teeth, giving other people an indescribable feeling of fear.

Different.

They don’t seem like an organization formed to frighten people, and definitely not drunks up to mischief, or an art group, or the police etc.

The blackmailing young boys first thought was of a few months ago, when Dollars had a dispute with Toramaru’s bousouzoku.

They became nervous, scared that these people were bousouzoku members and were covering their faces in order to attack anonymously.

After a moment of stalemate, one masked boy used a cheerful voice and said.

“We’re also Dollars, do you want help?”

“Huh?”

“……”

The blackmailing boys wrinkled their brows, the office worker curled up by the wall released a frightened sound.

“Oh yeah, I’m going to give you guys my money, get lost!”

After knowing that these people were also dollars, the boys relaxed and crudely rebuffed them.

The masked boys looked at one another, then beckoned with their hands to say.

“Oh, that’s not right, your mistaken.”

“Huh?”

During this time when the blackmailing boys were glaring, a sound like a drum was heard from behind them.

They turned around – and saw not far from them was a similarly masked boy with a baseball bat, in front of him one of their own members was lying on the floor unconscious.

“You, bastard…!?”

Behind him were several more masked boys. The ones that tried to extort the office worker had ended up in their own plight.

The exit and entry passes were useless. In the narrow lane, the blackmailing boys were completely surrounded.

Then, one of the masked boys said.

“Okay, give us your mobiles, we’re gonna help you quit Dollars.”

The masked boy laughed and swayed toward them with his strange hat, his neck emitting a crick as he stretched it to one side.

“Guys like you left in Dollars will only lead to bad outcomes.”

“The leader plans to exclude all your type of people.”

Dollars have changed.

Some people on the street side alley whisper this.

In this association – you can no longer have complete leisure and freedom.

The Ikebukuro capital is rushing.

“Now that I look at it, letting you handle this situation is really giving me a headache, head-director.”

In the back seat of a high-class black car, a strange man wearing a white gas mask used a compassionate voice to say.

“It’s not as bad as a headache, however the situation truly doesn’t look very optimistic.”

The person on the opposite side replied.

His age is approximately 60 years old.

The man’s silver hair was made to look very tidy by using wax. He stares the gas-masked man- Shingen Kishitani, and used a taunting tone to say:

“The reason I have such bad luck is all because of you Nebula people.”

“Ah, it seems you still don’t know, Yagiri head-director.”

“Don’t put on your airs, it serves only make others exhausted.”

Shingen slowly shook his head, and laughed mockingly under the gas mask.

“Though you sit in the position of head-director right now, from the moment this company is classified as Nebula, Yagiri Seitarou will also become one of the ‘Nebula people’. I hope you don’t forget that.”

Compared to Shingen’s teasing tone, the white haired man responded with no expression.

“When regarding humanity, there’s a saying: ‘the most frightening things are humans themselves”, this is a phrase that I’ve believed in ever since I was young.”

“This world doesn’t really hold anything especially fearful, just like how anything is capable of causing cancer, any life is capable of exterminating another’s life. Anyway, I didn’t taunt you into coming today just to catch the wind together.”

“Then what did you want to say? I thought Nebula still wasn’t attached to the ‘head’.”

Towards Yagiri Seitarou, who indifferently started talking about the head, Shingen wearing his gas mask tranquilly replied.

“Don’t be like that, I’m telling the truth, I only wanted to chat with you as an old friend not as a Nebula member. And maybe, give you some suitable ‘advice’.”

“Advice?”

Seitarou looked at Shingen confused, Shingen stared at his fingers grasped on his kneecaps, his face also showing no expression.

“Yodogiri Jinnai.”

“…...!”

At the moment he heard the name, Seitarou’s face darkened, he turned his head to stare at the passing scenery through the car window.

The concrete jungle on the side of the highway showed many glass windows, from time to time Shingen’s face appeared. Though he could only hear Shingen say:

“Given this kind of response, I guess the rumour that you and that man interact are true.”

“.....”

“How do I say this, Yodogiri is dangerous, if you want to stay safe it’s better if you don’t go near him. Maybe you wish to use him, but it’ll end in the contrary, with him using you. The work he does is rotten, he’s the best when it comes to stepping on others to climb to the top..... though it’s rotten, there’s always injustice done to the victims.”

Shingen finished with these obscure words, Seitarou shook his head with a bitter smile.

“I’m surprised, so Nebula sees you as a weird man that can’t elect methods, I didn’t think you would be so vigilant about Yodogiri Jinnai.”

“I am very cautious at Nebula, after all the company gets fed with things related to evil spirits like vampires, it really doesn’t give people a good public image. In the end, if I’m not electing the methods, it’s because after I obtained Celty’s head it wasn’t necessary for me to do other things, just stealing myself to get here is enough.”

“You still dare to say that.”

“Really the one that doesn’t elect methods is you. Originally, the head was supposed to go to Nebula 20 years ago, but you used my son’s life to steal it, have you forgotten that?”

Seitarou responded to Shingen’s statement while still staring out the window.

“Once you pass the age of 50, the memories’ capability gradually gets worse, let me recollect for a while, I remember you very straight forwardly asked to sell it to me?”

“Hng. When I was asking the boss: “My son’s life might be in danger, can you sell the head to any other company?” I had no idea you would reply: “There’s nothing we can do even if your child’s in danger, after

all this can't be reported to the police." Because we know that we can't publicize any of this, and can only vehemently deny any involvement."

".....Your company really has its values. The moment I thought this world-known organization was preparing to steal my company away, I was really disgusted."

"Aren't you recalling bad things? This is a good opportunity, forget all about the unhappy things."

His tone didn't sound like he was being ironic. Because Shingen's face was covered by the gas mask, Seitarou couldn't properly see his expression and started to doubt his true intentions -- he leaned his head on the back of his seat, seemingly ignoring the other occupant, closed his eyes and said.

"How can anyone forget, last year I experienced the most bad luck, not only did Yagiri pharmaceuticals get bought over by Nebula, the 'head' got taken by Namie to who knows where."

"With your ability, you can't find the whereabouts of your niece? When the time right, just pretend to rob them and steal the head back."

".....That's isn't necessary, research on the head is already complete. Currently, we only have to wait for a conclusion. Modern technology obtaining that is inevitable, I even thought we would find knowledge on the supernatural aspect..... anyway, the reason Namie continues this senseless research is because she wholeheartedly wishes to separate Seiji from his craving of the 'head'."

Seitarou exhaustedly sighed, on seeing this, Shingen mischievously asked.

"You understand this lets Namie act as she wants, it seems you still treat your niece well."

"Her talent is quite outstanding, while my brother.... her father was mediocre, I thought I'd rely on Namie if I wanted to make progress on the research."

"Yes..... but, from the beginning you didn't plan to use the head as a research object. Your nephew also adopted that kind of distorted love because he saw the 'head' at your house, right?"

"Your just like back then, you love to meddle in other people's business."

Seitarou sighed, Shingen wore a ridiculing smile and said.

"It's not that. And aren't you and your nephew alike? An age that still recklessly falls in love with that head. From when you were a bachelor until now, due to your love for that beautiful head you didn't even hesitate to threaten me."

"Your reasoning only scores 50 points."

The car reached a traffic jam and gradually slowed down.

"Of course, I did think that head was beautiful, I saw it as an artistic vision, and regarded it as the opposite sex. You're right, I was once at the age where I loved and desired it, but I'm already old now, I don't have the qualification to talk romanticism anymore. Though I can't do anything to help Seiji, sometimes I'm extremely envious of him."

Seitarou seemed to be recalling the past, he lifted his head and stared at the car's ceiling, then as if talking to himself.

"If I can comprehend love from this envy, then maybe I am in love, falling in love with that kind of spirit would be the same as releasing my soul from the contingency of the mortal world."

"What your saying now is the delusions of the young..... but, even if we knew the Earth had such reasonable existence's, are others who show infatuation also pardonable under the circumstances."

Shingen beside his friend gently shook his head, and through the gas mask deeply sighed.

“Then I’ll advise you again, don’t continue your interaction with Yodogiri Jinnai.”

“Then I’ll ask you, besides being a sycophant broker with otherwise no merits, is he really that dangerous?”

“If it was only him being a sycophant, then he wouldn’t have made an enemy out of Awakusu-kai.”

As Shingen said the name of this violent gang, he attentively stared at his feet.

“You are always so arrogant, I was afraid that you wanted to use him till his last drop of blood, then abandon him when the time is right..... but you mustn’t regard him as a lizard’s tail, this is very dangerous. Perhaps he really is a lizards tail, but when the time comes the tail can also take initiative to abandon the body.”

“Your metaphors are abstract as always……. but I’ll engrave it to my memory.”

Seitarou wore a serious face and nodded his head, though it’s still uncertain whether he took the advice.

10 minutes later.

Seitarou got out of the car. Shingen asked the driver.

“Oh right, what do you know about Yodogiri?”

The Russian man sitting in the drivers seat -- Igor, shook his head

“Nothing much, apart from what you’ve said, I know nothing and I have no interest in knowing.”

“I see..... well, you’ve already helped Nebula..... no, helped me for 3 months now, you don’t need to go back to Russia?”

“The vice-president asked me to keep an eye on Miss Vorona’s every movement, so I thought I didn’t have to worry about much.... then there’s also Awakusu-kai’s ‘business’, therefore I decided to stay in Japan for a while.”

“Are you sure your Visa is all right? Don’t wait till the time the police have to take you away, I don’t have a driver’s license, if we go to places like this, there’s no way back.”

“Don’t worry. I got a ‘15 year gem processing business’ technical Visa that lets me stay in Japan for long periods of time. Dennis and Simon want to get permanent resident certificates. But I don’t really like this country. Oh, but of course, I don’t find it horrible.”

Igor stopped and started, then asked the employer sitting behind him.

“..... That man called Yodogiri, is he really that dangerous?”

“You and him, Vorona and people from Awakusu-kai can be classified as different types. If we compare you guys to sharp knives, that guy will have a toxicant..... likely a radioactive substance. If you don’t have the correct knowledge, you’ll end up in a situation where you don’t notice your own body gradually corroding..... until the difference is obvious, it’s a great power.”

Shingen gradually added emphasis to his words, for Igor he cited an easy to understand example.

“.....Igor, do you still remember the case in early spring where you were entrusted to assassinate the killing monster ‘Hollywood’?”

“That time I had to do a little plastic surgery on my face, I remember the person who wanted ‘Hollywood’ dead was Yodogiri, right?”

“Yes, that killing monster ‘Hollywood’-- Hijiribe Ruri started out because she wanted to kill Yodogiri, but in the end he escaped. From that point, her ‘abnormality’ was exposed.”

“I see. But that guy and the director of Yagiri pharmaceuticals collaborating, what do they want?”

The murderer who hardly knows what's going on and against his occupation curiously asked his employer.

But Shingen hardly conceals anything either, he divulges the truth in full detail.

"That guy's a broker, he hides in his performance office."

".....It seems like he engages in human trading?"

"That too..... but he also does trading on things outside of humans."

"Now that I think about it, 20 years ago the person who gave me the information on the sword 'Saika' and the whereabouts of the headless knight was Yodogiri."

The moment he heard the word 'Saika' -- the driver's body trembled slightly.

Shingen noticed the response and asked.

"Igor, there was something I've been meaning to ask you."

"What is it?"

"Have you been cut by 'Saika' before?"

To this blatant inquiry, Igor smiled bitterly and answered.

".....Whatever you think happened happened."

Through the rear view mirror Shingen confirmed his answer when both Igor's eyes emitted a red glow, he then shrugged his shoulders and said with a calm expression.

"Then, let's say your 'Saika's' child, and have become an unnatural being..... based on this, I'll give you some advice."

"What advice?"

"Stay away from Yodogiri Jinnai."

"Because you might be sold to some place far away."

Prologue

Chatroom

Kyo [I want to say, Hanejima Yuuhei-san relying on his ever changing performing skill can act out any kind of role, he's already become a part of the entire universe! In other words, any part of the world has fused with Yuuhei-san….. when I close my eyes I can feel Yuuhei right beside me! Everytime I breathe I can feel Yuuhei gradually integrate into me….. everybody integrates joyfully, integrate Yuuhei-san into my bosom!]

Mai [No.]

Mai [I'll think of the girl together with him.]

Mai [Hijiribe Ruri.]

Kyo [Ya ya, Mai-san, you saw the news about Ruri and Yuuhei's love and got jealous right, but think about it! Hijiribe Ruri is a part of Hanejima Yuuhei's world! If you have the leisure to be jealous, then become a part of Hanejima Yuuhei before Hijiribe Ruri, go love, go fuse!]

Mai [Ah.]

Mai [Then 3 people together.]

Mai [Ouch.]

Mai [Don't pinch me.]

Kyo [How can you be so mean. Though, if you do interpret the words I just typed, you'll start feeling some unpleasant religious things. But, if we can slowly transform into this joyful state, then perhaps there's nothing to be frightened of!]

Mai [Kyo, you're scary.]

--------Setton has entered the Chatroom--------

Setton [Good evening.]

Setton [Kyo's interest is intense as always.]

Mai [Good Evening.]

Kyo [Peace, Setton! This so-called 'interest' insufficiently represents my mood. Our love for Yuuhei has already surpassed any boundary that can be expressed using vocabulary! If a word must be used, then there can only be the simple phrase of 'Love'!]

Kyo [Love! Love! This extraordinary love for Yuuhei is my life's driving force.]

Mai [Scary.]

Setton [You really like Hanejima Yuuhei.]

---------Bakyura has entered the Chatroom--------

Bakyura [Hello everyone.]

Mai [Good evening.]

Setton [Good evening.]

Bakyura [That rumour about Yuuhei being in love with Ruri.]

Bakyura [I heard recently they have a stalker.]

Setton [Stalker?]

Bakyura [I heard there was someone using her pictures to cause trouble.]

Bakyura [It's said the photo's held some sort of secret.]

Setton [Huh, what is it, is it secretly photographed pictures?]

Kyo [Ah, Bakyura, peace. I've also heard of this, but as it is, if there really were these pictures, all of it could be posted online to indulge propaganda, but it seems that no one has seen these pictures.]

Mai [Dollars.]

Setton [Huh?]

Bakyura [What about Dollars?]

Kyo [Ah, sorry, Mai inadvertently said it…… actually, some people think the stalker is in Dollars.]

Setton [Oh, that kind of thing.]

Kyo [Apparently in Dollars there are Ruri fans, it could be that one side of the fanbase gather information while the other stalks Ruri…. for a female idol, once there's news about falling in love, most of the fan's spirit simply fall, but not all of them. It could be that the fans think that she's betrayed their love and therefore turn towards hatred and then take this kind of action.]

Mai [Scary.]

Kyo [Right, forget about marrying Yuuhei, we can still continue to love him deeply!]

Mai [But I'm still greatly hurt.]

Mai [Wah.]

Mai [Ah.]

Setton [What's wrong?]

Kyo [Nothing, it seems Mai's a little insane, never mind.]

Setton [I see…. But if that stalker was stemmed from hatred, I would be worried.]

Setton [During the time the scandal was spreading, a lot of people also attacked Yuuhei.]

------Saika has entered the Chatroom-----

Setton [Ah, good evening.]

Kyo [Oh, Saika, peace.]

Saika [Good evening.]

Bakyura [Looking back.]

Bakyura [Recently, it seems Tanaka Tarou hasn't come to the chatroom.]

Bakyura [No one here has communicated with him on or offline?]

Kyo [I think it's not necessary for you to worry, he should be fine. He might be possibly weary of the Internet or he might have gone to other chatrooms. Remaining in the same chatroom is very difficult for a human to accomplish, the human will is like history, always fast-changing.]

Saika [I'm worried he's fallen ill or something.]

Setton [Speaking of which, I haven't seen Kanra for a while either.]

Setton [The subject we just talked about, the one who knows the most would also be Kanra.]

Kyo [Now you definitely shouldn't worry, he didn't say when he'd be back. If everyone's lonely because there are fewer people, I think we should invite some new people to join as well?]

Bakyura [Kanra, he……]

Bakyura [Forget it.]

Bakyura [When that happens I would actually be really happy.]

Setton [Oh, you and Kanra are offline friends.]

Setton [And no one meets with Tanaka Tarou offline?]

Kyo [It seems he also meets some people in this chatroom, he's also very familiar with the occurrences in Tokyo, it couldn't be that the real him doesn't have a friend to talk to.]

Mai [Shouldn't be all alone.]

Setton [All alone.]

Bakyura [I see….]

Kyo [Oh right, if you can interact with Kanra on and offline, then why don't you directly ask Kanra? I think Tanaka Tarou and Kanra know each other.]

Mai [Friends.]

Setton [Oh, are they?]

Kyo [Though, I'm also unable to accept the chatroom becoming more lonely, me and Mai plan to invite several acquaintances to come in.]

Setton [Oh, that's a good idea, I'll also try to ask several acquaintances to come…. but the control person Kanra isn't here, is it okay for us to do as we like?]

Bakyura [Never mind that guy.]

Bakyura [Anyway, I'll try to find people too.]

Saika [I'll also look for friends to join.]

Saika [It seems it'll become more lively.]

Someday, Ikebukuro somewhere, Happy Shade Clubhouse

This is a clubhouse in Ikebukuro that teaches all kinds of fighting techniques.

In a cushioned mat room, a young girl still in elementary school – Awakusu Akane is conducting defense training. Besides her, there were a lot of other children, elderly people and personnel in the room that generated a lot of noise.

Even so, the atmosphere was not carefree in the least. Often sounds of hits and shouts resounded and flooded the room with a sense of urgency.

Akane gazes at the defensive training from afar, Orihara Mairu while stretching her ligament asked the man beside her.

"Ya ya Sensei, what's with Akane-chan? Is she practicing martial arts?"

"You've already asked me that twice, once when she first arrived and another last month."

The man stands in a position that overlooks the practices and doesn't turn his head to respond.

"The answer is the same as last time, I still don't know if she's here for defense. Father thinks just let her practice Bojutsu (staff technique) like Akabayashi, but I don't know if she's suited to that. In the end, as long as she practices she'll get stronger, then she can defend. Once she becomes stronger, as long as she doesn't get stronger than me it's fine."

"Sensei, you really don't teach anybody anything, then you resort to violence. How can you have no sense of character."

"Do you want me to one hit K.O. you then rip your clothes off, you little brat!"

The man immediately retorts with these words that are incompatible with his 'teacher' status. He is one the teachers here at Happy Shade Clubhouse, Sharaku Eijirou.

He’s approximately 30 years old and the second son of the clubhouse host, Sharaku Eiji.

Sharaku Eijirou has a strict elder brother Eiichirou as well a competent and ruthless little sister Mikiya, as a family they were all involved in opening this dojo. Looking at it, the dojo seems filled with ancient Japanese Buddhist customs – but Eijirou gives a very different impression.

Though he’s a teacher, when Mairu actually calls him sensei, it’s always like she’s mocking him.

“If you do that to me, than forget about even a dog biting you, Eiji-boss and Eiichirou-sensei won’t forgive you.”

“Before that, I’ll probably suffer from Mikiya’s violence…. Hum, just thinking about it makes me shiver.”

The man’s manner makes people doubt if he really teaches people defense – but Mairu doesn’t care about that, she pretends to stand up then kicks her leg out while he’s unprepared.

Eijirou easily catches her attack with one hand, then with an expression of ridicule said to her.

“Really, whether I understand martial arts or not, this is my family fortune, it doesn’t matter if you’re the granddaughter of an underworld gang or my dad as minister, we don’t decide on good or bad. So long as they pay money, lending people sand bags is no problem, for instance, your promiscuous little sister.”

“If you keep talking like that, I’ll consider this sexual harassment.”

“Shut up… I’m saying this depends on her, though father and brother obviously don’t think like this.”

Normally, a conversation like this continues for a while.

However, suddenly a clear sound is heard from the direction of the window.

The source of the sound is coming from the previous training room.

Pa, pa…… the sound coordinates to create a rhythm, the noise itself sounds like something is breaking.

“This sounds not bad, who is it?”

Mairu asked. Eijirou turned his head and whispered.

“…… Adabashi.”

“Oh, it’s that obscure looking guy?”

“Though he’s not my family’s official member, but as I just said, as long as they have money it doesn’t matter if he’s a member, we can still loan the sandbag to a student for 30 minutes… Adabashi just recently joined, I’ve met him a couple times, but….. that guy’s dangerous, it’s better not to go near him.”

Eijirou changed from his previous cocky attitude, and said this with a more serious expression.

“What what? He’s strong? Stronger than sensei? Stronger than sensei? Stronger than boss? Stronger than coach Mikiya? Stronger than Akabayashi? Stronger than Traugott Geissendörfer? Can it be, stronger than Shizuo!?”

“No, he’s a lot weaker than me.”

“Whaaat….. weaker than sensei…….”

“You dare make your disappointment so obvious, I just started to show concern for you and in the end you despise me more. Say, how can you even compare him withTraugott and Heiwajima Shizuo.”

Eijirou’s face twitched as he said this. Mairu didn’t notice and continued to address her curiosity.

“Then why can’t I go near him?”

"….mmm, it might just be my prejudice…."

While listening to the sound of the sandbag being hit, Eijirou lifted his head to look at the ceiling –

"That guy, it doesn't seem like he trains here in order to become stronger—"

"How can I say it, he gives people an uncomfortable feeling……."

In a building

A man is rapidly kicking a sandbag, the sandbag was hit with a clear pa, pa sound.

He was a thin man.

But looking at his exposed arms and thighs, one would know he's not delicate.

The blue veins in his muscles when he strikes are like thick iron wires, it's easy to imagine the scene like a dinosaur's leg and its prey.

This man – Adabashi's solid but thin body seemed like it has excellent discipline, it had the rhythm to continuously kick the sandbag.

"……."

After 50 kicks, Adabashi laughs silently.

Not being a member of the dojo, he silently walks to the change rooms without greeting the surrounding students.

He sits on a corner bench in the change room, and slowly looks around to confirm that no one else is there.

He starts to loosen the bandage wrapped around his ankle.

Anyone would assume he wrapped the white bandage around his ankle to safeguard it – a slip of paper fell out.

Though it was separated from the bandage, but the piece of paper has already become full of wrinkles due to the prior kicking.

Adabashi picked up the piece of paper and stared at the content happily.

The paper was printed with a person's picture, and looked like it was ripped from a magazine.

It was the idol—Hijiribe Ruri.

It seemed like a photo from an information album. The Hijiribe in the picture was the same as the album cover, the whole body wrapped around the bandage created and enchanting image.

The picture's beauty was so natural, as if it was a picture meant to capture the souls of her fans --- but at the moment it was drenched in the man's sweat, the wrinkled picture had long since lost its appeal.

But, Adabashi as if in a trance actually licked the picture –

Then, like he was eating roasted seafood, one bite after another he ripped the picture apart.

He didn't spit out the pieces of paper, but kept on chewing it in his mouth.

Afterward, he took the other half of the picture still in his hand and stuffed it all in his mouth, then chewed for a while.

The paper gradually saturated with his saliva and became harder and harder.

Then, using more force he chomped down on the hard paper – and after the paper broke into smaller pieces, he swallowed.

“Gulp.”

What’s the reason he wants to swallow a picture of Hijiribe Ruri into his stomach. His manic eyes suddenly became somewhat moist.

“Ah, ke ke, ke.”

Adabashi’s throat made cough-like sounds. It seemed a part of the paper got stuck somewhere deep in his throat.

After coughing for a while, the paper was completely ingested into his belly.

At this point, he suddenly made another weird noise – “sha”, different from before.

He slightly inclined his body forward, his slight frame shivering.

The weird noise that came from his mouth sounded like friction between the air and his teeth.

Sha…….. sha……. the noise didn’t stop resounding within the change room, it would make someone think there was one of those human-eating monster seen in the movies there.

Nobody here knows, this is the unique laughter that Adabashi lets out only when he’s excited.

The sound is extremely frightening, so much so that a student that happened to walk by the change room heard the sound and decided to turn back to the training room.

Without knowing if it was because the wet paper made his breath dry, his lips had several cracks, with blood seeping out.

Licking his lips, he could taste the iron flavour – Adabashi laughed.

He reached for his bag.

Took out a massive amount of paper from inside. All of them ripped out of magazines or printed pictures from online.

All the papers had a common feature, which is they all show Hijiribe Ruri.

He takes 1 paper -- and like he’s putting on medicinal ointment, he places the paper on his ankle and starts to wrap it up.

Then, once he looks like he initially did he walks back to the training room and starts kicking the sandbag.

Pa, pa…… kicking the sandbag with a rhythmic sound, Adabashi continues with a calm feeling.

He feels that the Hijiribe Ruri pasted on his ankle is gradually being crushed under his kicks.

Doing this gives him a pessimistic excitement. Hiding this kind of feeling – to seem like his mission is normal, Adabashi again and again destroys Ruri’s picture by clamping it between the sandbag and his leg.

From his breath, the air around him is slowly enveloped with his distorted desire.

# 一章『紆余曲折@Durahanrider』

© 345 Ryohgo Narita

# Chapter 1 “Twisting and turning @ durahanrider”

Somewhere in Kanto at night

Several cars sped along the road.

There is a jet-black car with black glass windows that doesn’t allow anyone to peep inside.

What follows behind on the road is a motorbike, the motorbike is still a fair distance away from the car. The rider on the motorbike is covered in a jet-black body suit. The motorbike drives at an illegal speed in order to chase the car.

It looks like an action movie scene, though there are several differences.

One is that the motorbike’s engine doesn’t make a single sound, instead from time to time you can hear a sound that resembles a horse neighing.

The motorbike doesn’t have headlights or a license plate, it is the same jet black colour as the riders clothes, the surrounding lights seem to get absorbed into the motorbike.

The third thing, and the last -- the black rider on the motorbike also wields a jet black sickle with a knife’s edge of approximately 2 meters long.

It looks as if a death god’s vehicle had jumped out of a picture and aims to drag the black car into the shadow world.

From the car’s point of view, it was like a picture from a horror movie.

Though the motorbike had no headlights, it gradually reduced the distance with the car in front.

The road doesn’t seem to have many cars passing through, on the opposite lane there were no cars at all.

The chase has continued for some time, in the moment that the motorbike was just about to close in on the car -- the car slowed down to drive along side the motorbike, then a car window wound down.

From inside the black car a red crossbow gun appeared.

Without hesitation, the crossbow gun shot out an arrow to puncture the rider’s body.

However, just when is it was about reached the rider’s chest, a black shadow emitted from the rider’s body and wrapped around it, the shadow then changed itself into a shape of a bow and shot the arrow back.

The arrow swiftly pierced the driver’s arm and he cried out in pain.

Meanwhile, the rider didn’t notice that other cars started crowding around – they also opened their windows, and started to throw grenades at the rider.

But the grenades were also stopped by the riders shadow. Wrapped around by the black shadow they stopped and floated in mid-air till the last of the lighter flames extinguished gradually with no oxygen to fuel it.

The grenades were then also thrown back into the cars, knocking out a gun that one man was taking out.

The gunman’s hand immediately ignited with a bursting flame.

Inside the car, a yell could be heard before it crashed into the guardrail and stopped. The stopped car broke into the middle of the motorcade (procession of cars).

At the same time, the car in front changed direction from the road and headed towards the coastal warehouse street.

The motorbike immediately chased it, but---

On the other side of the warehouse street, a helicopter flew in front of the rider, promptly destroying all surrounding sound. It wasn't a military helicopter, it was a small helicopter with only 3 seats, but it's also defiantly not something someone can obtain easily.

The motorbike rider situated in the warehouse gap was exposed under an illumination of light.

At this time, a man in the helicopter held a machine gun in his hand, aimed it at the motorbike and immediately started shooting repeatedly. The man who held the machine gun didn't look like a serviceman, his hand on the trigger aiming at the rider appeared very stiff, then –

The sickle that the rider had been holding transformed into a giant black shadow umbrella and stopped the hail of bullets, the bullets didn't even bounce off but was swallowed into the thick shadow.

Several rounds of bullets that didn't hit the motorbike had hit several of the doors and tires of the surrounding cars, the entire motorcade of cars immediately started scattering in all directions panic-stricken.

On the helicopter the gunman saw the stopped attack, took out a high explosive hand grenade and threw it down to the black motorbike below.

When the rider realized what was coming, the motorbike began adding layer after layer of shadow around itself, but –

The grenade detonated before the rider had the time, the black motorbike was thrown by the shockwave into the sea next the warehouse.

"Yeah! Serves him right!"

The gun man on the helicopter shouted while deciding to shoot a few more times into the sea – he didn't know why, but something didn't feel right.

A motorbike dropping into the sea usually creates a bigger splash.

The night sea reflected an illumination of light that made it hard to see the situation clearly.

While he was holding his breath carefully observing the sea's surface – an 'unusual' sound reached his ears.

The neighing sound of the black motorbike resounded from the sea.

"Wha……."

This isn't a hallucination.

Once the crew realized this, the gunman and helicopter pilots stared with wide eyes.

A 'shadow' with the shape of an oil truck emerged from the sea.

The shadow extended like a black dragon into the air and headed towards the helicopter, from that shadow the black motorbike leapt out.

In front of where the black motorbike had fallen into the sea was a shadow that had changed into a tunnel shaped path, the motorbike along the inside of this path sneakily broke from the water surface.

Facing this incredible scene, the helicopter gunman yelled out and started to fire at the motorbike again – but the bullets quickly ran out, while flustered he tried to replace the cartridge.

However, the time needed was enough for the rider.

A shadow extended toward the leading car of the motorcade, it transformed into a large black wave and wrapped entirely around the car.

With the shadow covering the car's front window, the car started to swerve and lose direction, the driver hurriedly tried to turn the steering wheel away – but the shadow entered through a window and clung to the wheel forcefully stopping the march of the vehicles.

But that was only the beginning.

The shadow enveloping the car gradually inflated, morphing into a large tree – it used the tree branches to extend and capture the helicopter that happened to be flying above the car.

The shadow winded around the helicopters propellers until it gently slowed down the velocity of its whirl.

The helicopter swerved fiercely, just when the crew thought it would turn in a circle and crash –

The tree-form shadow twined around the helicopter with innumerable branches effectively stilling it, the end result looked like a giant sculpture in front of the warehouses.

"……."

The rider stopped her motorbike in front of the tree, then used her shadow to make stairs and slowly made her way towards the helicopter tied down by the shadow.

She grabbed the machine gun out of the stuttering gunman's hands, then turned to leave –

"Wa, wai, wait…… monster… why aren't you destroying us?"

The man sitting in the pilots seat stares at the rider and asked.

"We are destroyed, aren't we already dead?"

"…… Huh?"

"I don't want to defend what just happened or get arrested by the police…. First, I'm not a murderer nor do I want to be one, killing isn't good… but speaking of this, I just saw on TV, this small helicopter is only 400 million yen? Though the helicopter's not mine, but destroying it would be pitiful."

The strange power he had just seen seemed a dream, the rider unexpectedly has a touch of humanity, while still filled with a stiff attitude.

The rider stared at the man's face, then like she just thought of something, asked.

"Since your still clearheaded, I'll ask you."

"The white maiden you guys kidnapped, where is she?"

2 hours later in a mansion, somewhere

"White maiden! Thank goodness your okay!"

A young girl ran up to a white snake that the rider brought over, and started to hug it.

If the snake had been thin, the hug would have crushed its spine, but this white snake was really thick, the whole body was so large one would expect it could strangle the young girl.

But, the white snake merely opened its round eyes and licked the young girls cheek with its tongue gently.

“Thank you! Thank you for saving White maiden.”

Facing the two girls with their shining eyes, the rider – Celty Sturluson used her PDA to type the words “Thank goodness”.

“I’m sorry to have troubled you.”

“I really don’t know how to thank you.”

“No need, this is my job, I’ve already handed those guys over to the authorities, as long as its reported that they stole a vehicle, they’ll be sent to jail.”

Celty received a thick envelope from the parents of the young girl, then waving goodbye to the girl and snake left the hotel.

This was what happened, Celty received a request from a rich couple that said “Our daughters pet has been kidnapped, please rescue her and bring her back” but Celty had no idea the process would unexpectedly involve a helicopter and firearms.

After she asked the kidnappers about the pet she found out that they actually intended to steal other things from the rich couple, but only after they robbed the goods into a truck, they realized the truck also hid a snake.

The parents were most worried about the snake instead of their stolen goods, the first thing they did was contact Celty instead of the police. Ironically, if the snake had been discovered, the parents would have had to pay a heavy fine, but Celty doesn’t meddle in these immaterial affairs.

- In the end, if my existence is recognized by society, I’ll be feared and treated as an endangered species.
- If according the rule ‘new species are named after their discoverer” then I’ll have my surname changed to Celty Kishitani.
- Hehe, feels the same as taking the surname of a husband after marriage.

Celty pondered this carelessly while also thinking back to the white snake before.

- Giving that pet the name ‘White maiden’ is really quite extreme.
- Is it from the ‘Tale of the white snake’ or a goddess metempsychosis (transmigration at death of a soul into a new body).

The name White maiden originated from a snake monster in ancient Chinese folklore. An a thousand year old white snake transformed into a beautiful maiden in order to pursue the man she loved, but in the end, her snake form was exposed and she was sealed – derived from this story, other kind of fables were made, there was also a happy version where the human and monster accepted each other’s identity and grew old together.

While reflecting on these kinds of typical literary references where different races marry, Celty joyfully speeds up her motorbike.

- People desiring these types of love stories.
- It’s just like with me and Shinra.

Celty Sturluson isn’t human.

She is called the ‘headless rider’, a one of a kind Scottish or Irish fairy – she will visit the homes of the dying and inform them of their impending death.

She carried around her severed head and rode a carriage pulled by a Coiste-bodhar, a headless horse, to the homes of the dying. If they thoughtlessly opened the door, they would get splashed with a bucket of blood – because of this, the headless rider became widely regarded as an unlucky messenger. Along with banshees, their tales were handed down through generations of European folklore.

Some people believe that the headless rider was the form that a goddess from Norse myths took on when she fell on Earth, whether this was true or not, Celty herself did not know.

Or it's not that she doesn't know.

But she couldn't remember.

When Celty had her head stolen, she lost her memories as well.

In order to recover the 'head', Celty had followed the scent of her head to Ikebukuro.

She transformed her headless horse into a motorbike, her armor into a rider suit, and here she's been wandering for several decades.

However from then until now, she still hasn't gotten either her head or her memories back.

She knows who stole her head.

And knows who is keeping her from finding it.

But in the end, she still doesn't know where her head is.

Celty thinks, right now it's good the way it is.

Right now, she can be with the one she loves, and spend every day with people who accept her.

If this kind of life makes her feel happy, then she might as well continue like this.

The headless woman had made up her mind, she'll show her determination through her actions in order to make up for her non-existent expressions.

This is – Celty Sturluson.

The moment Celty realized her heart rippled at the thought of the man living with her, she quickly composed herself and stepped on the accelerator.

Hearing a horse's neigh in place of the sound of an engine, she started to review her day's work.

- I wouldn't have thought that a pet kidnapping would lead to a giant crime syndicate.
- Oh well, after all I've already tied up those guys and their guns and threw them in front of the police station.
- This is the first time I encountered a helicopter, thank goodness it wasn't too much for me.
- I kind of felt like Angelina Jolie starring in a big production movie.

The way her enemies saw it, Celty wasn't just like any action movie heroine, she could virtually equal the likes of Jason or Freddy or more abnormal types. But Celty doesn't care about any of this, and her excitement increased till even her partner, the Coiste-bodhar reared up on his back wheels.

The scene was like howling at the moon, causing the drivers of the surrounding cars to drive away from its side fearfully—

However, a black silhouette actually defied the current and moved closer toward the 'headless rider', though Celty didn't notice.

“Oi, headless.”

Along with the sound of a motorbike engine, a low and deep male voice reverberated around the inside of Celty’s helmet.

At that moment, Celty’s entire body broke out in goose bumps, she very slowly turned her head toward the sound.

Behind her was a man that she was familiar with but whom she ‘never wanted to meet again’ – the policeman mounted on a white motorbike, Kinnosuke Kusuhara.

"You have some guts traveling over 50 metres on your rear wheel. You should understand, right now you can’t just make up some flimsy pretense about your front wheel to muddle through this situation. Also, the body has a lot of problems.”

- !?

At the moment when his words stopped, Celty’s body broke out in a nameless fear. As if noticing her feelings, the Coiste-bodher immediately increased its speed.

- S-s-s-s-sorry!

Celty shouted out in her heart. Even when she was facing the machine gun, she didn’t feel this kind of extreme fear, and so she once again performed the same chase game as before.

Except this time her role was not as the pursuer – but as a powerless girl fleeing from a monster's evil clutches.

※※※※※

- An hour later, Kawagoe street, topmost story of a high-class apartment

"It scared me, it scared me…. I’m sorry, I'm sorry.”

Celty types these words on her PDA while leaning on her roommate – Kishitani Shinra’s shoulder.

Although Celty had no need to breathe, she looked to be taking deep breaths, her whole body couldn't stop quivering.

“Why, why can that white motorbikes avoid all my shadows!? I extended my shadow just like the time I stopped the helicopter, but the motorbike actually tilted horizontally till it was lying down and brushed past my shadow, and then he even made his way towards me along the shadow that extended from my arm into the air!?”

While fleeing around Tokyo, Celty jumped into a river from beside a tea station by creating a shadow tunnel, just like during the helicopter incident. It was only then she was able to escape from the white motorbike, the moment she reached home, Celty threw herself into Shinra's arms.

She was like this every time that officer chased her. Shinra skillfully and soothingly stroked the back of Celty’s shaking form and said.

“It must be intuition and experience. When he reached the river boundary he might have clearly seen your shadow.”

“It doesn’t even matter if he saw it clearly, who would normally drive on top of a shadow!? So, I thought I could use it to my advantage, I would just branch out my shadow to tie down the tires, but then he flashed his headlights at me, disorienting my eyes, by the time I recovered he disappeared!”

“Celty can still get disoriented without having eyes?”

“It wasn’t like subconsciously closing your eyes, it was more like losing your sight temporarily in the glare of a strong light…. don't make wild assumptions! What should I do, Shinra, though ‘Shooter’ might not like it, but if I add on headlights and a license plate, do you think he’ll let me off?”

It seems like Celty was still in a state of terror and confusion. Looking at Celty speaking so incoherently, Shinra simultaneously thought “How cute!” in his heart while outwardly calmly replying.

"Don’t worry, Celty, if he wanted to demand you put on headlights and a license plate, it’ll be the final play. Now calm down, you have a guest.”

“?”

- I have, a guest?

Celty tilted her neck to gradually recover her composure, and noticed a pair of female boots at the front door.

She then turned her head to look out towards the corridor—

A young girl – Sonohara Anri was gazing at Celty through a crack in the door, and made a bowing motion.

※※※※※

Same time, somewhere in Ikebururo

In an avenue full of commercial businesses far from the heart of Ikebukuro, there stood an ordinary building.

A detective agency, a website management office, a telephone club, a dating agency, a loan office, a real estate agency etc., it seems there are all sorts of signboards from every trade, but every company from the second level onwards to the highest level of this building was actually connected to each other.

Each of the various agencies on every level will interfere with each other when the situation calls for it, this entire commercial building is basically like a kind of comprehensive business organization.

At the topmost floor.

In an ordinary office, 3 people that just came back from being out chat with one another while packing up their things to go home.

“Seriously, suddenly breaking the rear-view mirror, even though that kind of thing can be fixed, but what happens if we accidently hit a kid because it was broken.”

“Sorry, I was muddle-headed for a while….”

“Speaking of which, I really lose to the kids these days, selling themselves on online dating sites for $500,000.”

A man with long braids – Tanaka Tom shook his head helplessly, while at his side a golden haired man – Heiwajima Shizuo tiredly responded.

“Yeah.”

At this time, the Russian female behind them – Vorona tilted her head and said.

“I deny. We smoothly collected the expenses from her parents, there is no need to admit defeat.”

“Er, no…. when I said ‘lose’ I didn’t mean…..”

Tom sighed in his response. This kind of conversation before leaving work wasn’t out of the ordinary, but—

The lady who was manning the front desk telephone pressed down the 'hold' button, turned to Shizuo and said.

“Heiwajima-san, it seems you have a guest, they’re already waiting in the reception room.”

“Huh? .....okay.”

Surprised, Shizuo moved towards the location near the office entrance that used a screen to separate it off as a reception room.

Tom watched him with surprise and exclaimed.

“Shizuo has a guest? How rare.”

“Calculating the probabilities, it might be because of the broken forklift from 3 days ago, now people have come to settle the score.”

“No, they would go directly to the boss for that…. Oh, could it be because of the broken rear-view mirror?”

Tom and Vorona who found Shizuo suddenly having guests strange approached the screen and peeked through the opening—in the reception room was a rarely seen smiling Shizuo – and an expressionless beautiful young male.

“Ah ah, there’s a face we don’t see too often, no wonder he had to go into the reception room.”

“I cannot say I don’t see it too often, I see his face on television and posters every day.”

Vorona used her strange way of speaking to respond to Tom’s mumbling.

However Vorona wasn’t wrong, the face in the reception room is constantly seen on TV.

“What’s up, Kasuka, specially coming all the way here.”

“I wanted to wait till you got off work…. is this okay?”

“There’s no problem, I was just about to go home. Is there something going on?”

Chatting with his little brother – Heiwajima Kasuka, Shizuo used a much more relaxed tone than usual to answer.

Expressionless as always, Kasuka looked toward the office entrance and said.

“Actually, I wanted to discuss something with brother…. first, I want to introduce you to someone… should we move to a different place?”

“There’s no need, this place is fine. Why, do you have someone waiting outside?”

“Yes…… it's better to be careful.”

Kasuka slowly walked toward the office entrance and opened the door leading towards the corridor.

What appeared before Shizuo – was a cloaked young girl, the girl entered the office gingerly.

“Ah, erm…. nice to meet you….”

The young girl greeted him using a tiny voice and bowed low – she is Heiwajima Kasuka’s colleague, with a very special kind of look in her eyes.

“! Hey hey, isn’t it Hijiribe Ruri!”

“Affirmative. I recall the photograph in the celebrity yearbook and her face are consistent.”

From where Tom and Vorona were situated, suddenly whispers could be heard from all directions.

“Is this real… it’s really them!”

“I just bought a photobook before this…..”

“It’s really Hanejima Yuuhei!? Can I take a picture?”

“I want an autograph.”

“Can we shake hands?”

“Since he’s Heiwajima’s little brother, then can he also fight?”

“Hijiribe Ruri, this is awesome! It’s said she's beautiful even without makeup and it's true!”

“Wah!”

Tom turned his head, he could see that a crowd of people had already gathered around the area near the screen. The office workers still in the building all ignored their work and instead crowded around the screen to look at the scene inside.

Not only this, but people from other floors had heard the rumor and also joined in.

“What are you doing!? Go away! Go away! Get back to work!”

Tom drove the crowd away in a low voice. Realizing that Shizuo might go crazy if he noticed the surrounding crowd, Tom decided to flee from the screen and return to his workbench.

Then it was only Vorona left pressing her stomach against the screen, adopting a ninja-like stance so she could continue eavesdropping in her position.

From her perspective, she merely wanted to understand Shizuo’s family in order to search for his vulnerabilities as much as possible.

But in other people’s opinion –

- “Oh, she’s very mindful about Shizuo’s family, it seems towards Shizuo she…”

This was the view of the general people.

“Ah….. I’ve read in the magazines, she’s your, that…..”

Shizuo started to speak but hesitated, Kasuka continued on lightly.

“My important person.”

“……..Right, right.”

Shizuo gently nodded, looking at Hijiribe Ruri.

“Are you trembling?”

Shizuo asked doubtfully, and as before Kasuka lightly stated.

“Ruri has seen brother when he fights.”

“Oh.”

These words seemed to be sufficient enough reason for her to be frightened. Shizuo looked away awkwardly, and after several seconds looked at Ruri again and said.

“Ah, that… it, it’s like that, it’s my bad.”

“Ah, no, no! I should be the one to…. apologize.”

A few months before –

To Ruri who had witnessed Shizuo fighting, in which it was completely possible to be pounded into the ground by a park bench he was wielding at that time, she was truly frightened by him—but what could she say, right now she could only try and stand firm. Despite Yuuhei saying ‘carefully explaining the situation will be enough’, her heart and soul experienced such a heavy trauma that she wished there were more time to prepare herself.

Besides fear, Ruri also felt a myriad of other emotions, Shizuo noticing her peculiar manner sighed and turned to his younger brother.

“Hey… I’m really happy that you thought about bringing her here to meet me, but you should really introduce her to father and mother first… also, right now you’ve only just publicly announced your relationship and people are making a ruckus, if you suddenly marry, will the situation ever settle down?”

“The thing I wanted to discuss with you isn’t that, brother.”

“Huh? Then what is it?”

Shizuo appeared confused. Yuuhei like a robot said with a flat and emotionless tone.

"Brother….. have you heard of Dollars before?”

Shinra's Apartment

"Ah, then….. I'm sorry to disturb you so suddenly."

A young girl wearing glasses sits at a dining table chair – Sonohara Anri again bowed her head in apology, but Celty carelessly shook her helmet and showed Anri her PDA.

"Don't worry about it, it's Shinra that made you come."

"How can you say that, Celty, you're going too far! You make me sound like a criminal! Like the quote 'Once shattered cannot return, the separation of husband and wife cannot be reunited'. Though I'm absolutely unwilling to pick your flower from the tree, I also cannot destroy your beautiful appearance."

Once Shinra finished his speech that nobody understood, Celty let out a sigh.

After a simple conversation, Celty understood the situation clearly, Anri had something she wanted to tell Celty though she was troubled on how to say it, then she accidently bumped into Shinra and was brought here.

"That's no good, Anri. How can you just follow such a suspicious guy?"

"Ah, here we go again. Though it's strange, when I'm called suspicious by Celty I don't get angry at all, in fact, it sounds quite porny, ahahahaha."

"Don't say such strange things in front of a high school girl!"

Celty, using her elbow, ruthlessly hit Shinra till he moaned painfully and threw him over to one side then turned back to Anri.

"So, what did you want to talk about?"

"Oh….. it's concerning Mikado-kun…"

"Oh, is it an emotional problem? Then you have mistakenly come to Celty and me. Though we appear lovey-dovey, dealing with emotional problems is something we have no experience in."

"N, no, it's not that. Mikado-kun and me aren't in that kind of relationship."

Anri lowered her red face, when Celty saw this she quickly used her shadow to cover Shinra's mouth shut.

- Although, I know Mikado's feelings towards Anri.

But there appears to be more complicated circumstances involved, so for now it's better not to provoke them.

While thinking this, Celty wrote on her PDA.

"So, are there any problems between you and Mikado?"

"Oh….. that's…. I also don't know how to say this right… recently, Mikado-kun has been acting strange."

"Strange? Is he listless, or saying weird things?"

"No, on the contrary…. recently, he's always showing an open, happy expression."

Anri stopped for a moment, like she was hesitant to continue, but then set a firm resolve to say.

"It's the same as when Kida-kun was still around."

A half-day before

“Ah, Sonohara-san, what a tiring day.”

After the graduation ceremony ended and class members gathered, Mikado and Anri bumped into each other.

“You’re also tired.”

Mikado greets her brightly and Anri also responds politely.

“Sonohara-san, have you planned your summer vacation?”

“Eh? .....Ah, nothing special is arranged.”

“Really? If you have time, then come look for me.”

“Ah…. okay.”

Hearing such an invitation, usually Anri would feel very happy.

A year before, if Anri had heard such an invitation, she might have puzzled over how to reply. However, after she met Mikado, Kida as well as Celty, in this circle of friends she slowly started to change.

Because of this, in regards to Mikado’s invitation, she should comply happily with a smile.… but for some reason Anri is unable to feel like this.

Because right now, Mikado is giving her an indescribably strange feeling.

During golden week, they experienced a number of incidents. Although she herself had met with a mysterious female and fought off surprise attacks for 2 consecutive days – Anri worries that Mikado has been dragged into a bad situation.

When she helped Mikado at that time, she might have been seen using her ‘sword’.

Though, in the past when Kida was bound in the yellow turban conflict, the opposite party had also seen the katana in her hand.

But, she thought perhaps this time it was much clearer.

Right now, still hidden inside her body, the sword continued to summon its love and was crying out in a song.

She’s worried that Mikado might reject her and Celty’s otherworldly presence – however ever since that incident that seemed only to surprise him, he hasn’t voiced anything relating to it.

But, even with this, she can’t stop worrying.

After that incident, Mikado changed.

Or perhaps it was more accurate to say, he changed back.

Since Kida’s disappearance, Mikado had forced himself to show a bright personality, but now that forced look can’t be seen anymore.

The first few days, because Anri was worried about his injuries as well as anxious of how he would react to her abnormality, she didn’t notice his change.

It was like he was realizing the significance of life again. Mikado’s smiling face and words were so full of life, wishes and goals.

Generally speaking, this would be a good thing.

But, to Anri, she doesn’t believe Mikado would completely forget about the situation with Kida.

Therefore, she concluded that Mikado was meeting up with Kida somewhere, and especially asked him "Have you met with something good?"

"Yes, if I can be with Sonohara-san and chat, then that's good."

Mikado doesn't usually unexpectedly crack jokes, this causes Anri to find it all the more strange.

- So there is something about the incident.

- But, humans are always changing…..

- Perhaps I made a mistake.

With these thoughts, the Anri who's always close to Mikado couldn't confidently say that 'recently, he's strange', she could only repress her feelings and continue her tranquil high school life.

A young girl that always stands on the edge observing.

Maybe because she's in this unique position, she can detect such matters.

Anri kept carrying these feelings till they gradually entered summer vacation, finally just when she and Mikado were parting ways with a few last words, she explicitly felt a stong sense of that 'strange feeling' coming from Mikado.

After school marking the beginning of summer vacation, on a crossroad where two people always parted ways, Mikado spoke to Anri with an earnest expression.

"I said, Sonohara-san."

"Huh? Oh, yes."

It was two people having an ordinary conversation, Anri was startled by Mikado's sudden earnest expression but what truly frightened her was the content of what Mikado just said.

"For me, no matter what kind of secret Sonohara-san is hiding, it doesn't matter."

"…..Eh?"

- What?

"Though I'm no help to you at all..…"

- Right now Mikado-kun….. what is he saying?

Ryuugamine Mikado

Kida Masaomi

And, Sonohara Anri

These 3 youths, each hold a valuable secret.

“Dollars” founder, Mikado.

“The Yellow Turbans” initiator and a key participant, Masaomi.

“Saika” weilder, specially hidden within her body, Anri.

Right now, Mikado knows of Anri’s secret, among these three people are three very close relationships.

Anri has realized Mikado’s status, but she doesn’t have the courage to confirm it.

The time when their secrets will mutually be told is when Kida Masaomi returns.

Regarding this point, Mikado and Anri’s hearts are clear.

Though she now has a circle of friends, but just as before her innermost feelings are kept in an abyss.

“But, no matter what Sonohara-san’s secret is. I’ll definitely create a place where you can live peacefully.”

“……”

Anri wanted to say something, but didn’t know what to say.

As if realizing Anri’s restless feelings through her silent response, Mikado smiled wider and added even more firmness to his voice.

“I — there’s still Masaomi, although he’s still not back, but I’ll definitely create a space where everyone can live a blessed life…… Sonohara-san, please just relax and wait.”

- Wrong.

The confused feelings within Anri shook their head.

She suddenly recalled Mikado’s words from a few months’ ago.

- “He’ll come back.”

- “Oh….”

- “I’m right, I’ve known Masaomi for a long time so I know, he’ll definitely come back.”

“That…..”

Anri awkwardly tried to say something, but at that moment Mikado, as if he suddenly realized something, hastily said.

“Ah, sorry, sorry. I said some weird things..… then, if there’s any problems give me a call.”

And like there was an enemy nearby, he concealed his awkward expression, finished talking and hurried away.

Anri showed a completely bewildered expression, but in the end didn't keep Mikado from leaving.

- Is there a place……. that doesn't suit.

Anri's mind ponders why she can't shake off these strange feelings, while slowly pacing along the bustling streets of Ikebukuro.

There were many times she wanted to talk to Celty, but whenever she took out her phone, she started to think "I can't let her worry about my problems" and put it back.

Just when she decided to go home, she suddenly heard a sound that caused her to stop.

It also gave her firm resolve to discuss her problems with Celty.

"Ah, isn't it Anri? How's Saika been lately?"

This was, of course, Shinra.

※※※※※

Then, the present situation

"He, compared to anybody, believes that Kida-kun will come back. But Mikado-kun said he'd create a space himself in order for Kida-kun to come back..… I find it strange."

Anri didn't know what expression was good.

She simply described all of the strange emotions she felt during the day's meeting like an open diary.

"So that's it, sounds like you think your own feelings are inferior compared to believing your friend."

"It's really not like Mikado-kun at all."

Celty crossed her arms to think.

- Though since he's willing to work hard, that's good.

- But why is there such a strong uneasy feeling.

- After golden week there was also this feeling… this feeling of uneasiness.

- So….. it's the relationship with that Aoba boy?

Celty felt she should go back to that location during golden week.

※※※※※

5th of May

“Today…. I especially came over to become friends with the black rider.”

At night, when Celty just got home, a boy named Kunamura Aoba appeared.

“How did you find this place?”

At Celty’s question, Aoba giggled and answered.

“It was half-accidental. But don’t worry, I won’t tell any police officers.”

Upon the word officers, Celty thought of one person and couldn’t help but shiver.

“Though I don’t know what’s going on, but let me ask.”

Shinra blocked Celty and indifferently said this to the youngster.

“Though you said you wanted to make friends, in order to do that you went straight to a strangers house to pay a visit, isn’t that too impolite? You might have gone through a lot of trouble to find this place, but that doesn’t matter to us.”

Facing Shinra’s interrogation, Aoba shrugged his shoulders.

“I also think this is impolite, but if I don’t do it this way, I’m afraid it’ll be difficult to talk to the headless rider.”

“We have no interest in getting involved in gangs like Toromaru, do you want me to use a method in order to keep your mouth shut?”

“Ah, you’ve heard my conversation with Mikado-sempai?”

Aoba standing on the roadside smiled bitterly then turned to Celty.

“It doesn’t matter if you try to keep my mouth shut. My partners also know of this place. If I go missing, this place will quickly be filled to the brim with officers and news media. Ah, and perhaps before that, there might be a little fire.”

“You’re threatening us?”

“No, sorry. I’m not threatening you. I don’t want to be like Mikado-sempai, I only want to maintain a good relationship with the headless rider and her friend, these are my honest words.”

- Liar.

- This person’s eyes don’t show the sincerity of making friends.

Celty, through her years of experience, came to this conclusion, and started to think of how to deal with this boy.

But, while she was thinking, Shinra pushed up his glasses and went up to him –

Watching the young boy, Aoba, for a while, Shinra said with a cool smile.

“You’re a lot like Orihara Izaya.”

“…….Comparing me with that guy is quite unexpected.”

On hearing Orihara Izaya's name, Aoba's relaxed expression was gone, instead his face showed clear loathing.

Shinra found this reaction satisfying, and still wearing his cold smile he said.

"Yeah, I thought you would hate hearing Izaya's name so I especially said it. But not as I expected, you know of Izaya's business. Could it be, you've suffered from his actions before?"

"……Why would you think that?"

"Because the way you talk is exactly alike. It might be accidently similar, I believe that you once dealt with him. Your essences are the same so consequently you're similar."

"……This is a bit much. Not only the black rider, you also live with her and you know that guy?"

Aoba didn't answer Shinra's earlier question, he simply kept asking his own questions with sharp eyes.

"Ah, because it's the same type of hate. You and Izaya are the same, the type that likes to play with the world. So if a guy exactly the same comes out, that'd be no fun. For people like you guys, you absolutely wouldn't share the world that you consider your own. For me, as long as my hand can hold onto Celty's, it's enough."

"?....."

During the time in which Aoba was trying to figure out what Shinra meant and continue his questioning –

He suddenly felt pain at his neck and finally understood Shinra's intention.

He didn't know when he took it out, Shinra's hand held a sharp scalpel, and the peak of the scalpel pressed against Aoba's neck. If Shinra used a little more force, the scalpel would easily pierce through Aoba's neck and puncture an artery.

"I'll give you a warning."

Shinra's expression didn't change.

Still wearing a disrespectful smile, like he wasn't about to take someone's life.

"I don't care whatever you and Izaya plan. But, if any of your actions destroy the content life that me and Celty have, then at that time we'll become irreconcilable enemies."

Though his life always had occasions where he was in danger – Aoba has long ago not shown any fear, he simply gazed neutrally at Shinra's smiling face. However, it's wasn't that he didn't feel any fear; this could be seen as sweat coming from his forehead and hands.

"I see, so the housemate and black rider have that kind of relationship."

In the middle of this tense atmosphere, a shadow appeared between the 2 people and forcefully separated them.

"Stop, Shinra. It'd be stupid to become a murderer over such a small matter."

"But, Celty."

"Just giving this matter over to the police is enough, don't bring me into it. Also, I don't want you to become a criminal because of me."

"…….Celty."

Although being an underground doctor was already a crime, this fact seemed to have temporarily slipped Celty's mind, Shinra looked like a little kid staring excitedly at Celty.

Aoba, who couldn't see the PDA, regarded the fuzzy conversation with confusion, though since Shinra seemed to have lost his anger, he breathed a sigh of relief.

"Though I don't know what your saying, but please don't do anything more suspicious. If my behavior hasn't made you happy, I apologize…. actually I came because I wanted your telephone number. If you're willing to tell me, I'll leave immediately."

"Oh. And….. this situation, please keep it a secret from Mikado-sempai."

※※※※※

After that, though they gave him their number, they haven't received any contact from him since then.

If he had any plans, over here we could also make a corresponding judgment, but as they haven't made any contact, instead we can't relax.

- Does this have any relation?

- Also, after golden week, I haven't met with Mikado.

Celty immersed herself in her recollection, while on the other side Shinra started to analyze the problem with Anri.

"Saying that he wants to create a space, this way of talking is really old-fashioned, but it's really not the kind of words that bad people would say. Anri, are you sure you didn't say anything to him, suddenly saying such words himself is like believing in a religious chant."

"And you have the right to say women are fussy!"

Celty hit Shinra's stomach heavily, then turned to Anri.

"I understand what your saying, and I also know the reason."

"Really?"

On seeing Anri's excited response, Celty considers what to write on her PDA.

"This conversation we're having must stay private. At school, does Mikado have any friends?"

"Eh?"

"Recently, are there any special friends related to Mikado that have appeared?"

"…..Then, ah….. the committee has a boy named Kunamura-kun that is recently always with him… all his other friends are from before, I think….. he hasn't communicated with anyone strange."

"Really?"

- The one called Kunamura is the strange one!

- At school he must act very honest…. should I tell Anri?

- But, if this circumstance has no relation to Mikado, then it will have the opposite effect.

Looking at Celty's awkward appearance, Shinra, still in pain, got up from the floor and began to lie.

"Yes, though I don't know who this Kunamura person is. But perhaps he's involved in Mikado's change."

"Oh….. but Aoba-kun doesn't seem like a bad guy….."

"No no, we can't be sure because we haven't met him, but still be more careful. Moreover, human's can change their expressions, you should know that, Anri."

"……That's true…"

Seeing Anri lower her head with a complex expression, Celty couldn't help her approval of Shinra given the situation.

- You did great, Shinra! This way, Anri will be more alert towards Aoba.

Seeing Celty nod in approval, Anri considered for a while then restlessly lifted her head again and said.

"But, if Mikado-kun really has changed, what will I do then?"

"Ah, how should you manage, rather it's best if you don't do anything."

"How can you say such irresponsible things, even if it's not your own problem, at least help to think things through."

Shinra read Celty's words of blame on the PDA, then smiled gently and said.

"That's just how boys are. You might say it's like a love performance..… always thinking that oneself is the most special, that one's idea is the best, that their actions are full of achievement, they're immersed in their own world."

"Is this what is commonly seen on the Internet, known as the "eighth-grade" syndrome?"

"Yes, this is a common trait anyone can fall victim to. Though usually kids get cured by the time they graduate middle school, but there are types that might carry the sickness for life. Mikado probably caught the sickness late during his second year of high school by looking at Celty's religious form, he only has to ignore it and it will heal."

Shinra cracked a joke as if he didn't care at all –

But he and Celty didn't realize.

Right now, Mikado hasn't moved onto a strange path.

Regarding the boy named Ryuugamine Mikado, Dollars –

Building his ideal Dollars has already become equal to his life's ambition, right now it's his entire existence.

However, Dollars itself is quietly changing.

Somewhere in Ikebukuro

Idol Hijiribe Ruri experiencing a stalker attack.

In channel 8 news, a male reporter publicized this information. Heiwajima Kasuka spoke to his brother.

“It’s said Ruri’s stalker appeared on the Dollars message board, I don’t understand much about Dollars. But when I was investigating, I accidentally saw brother’s name, so I thought you would know more about Dollars than me.”

“Ah, so that’s it. But, I’m no longer a Dollars member anymore. Even though I got an invite….. but, because there were disgusting people there, I just haven’t been on.”

Recalling the matter months ago, Shizuo looked at the ceiling and quietly said.

“Dollars is only a site where you can connect to several message centres on your phone. What kind of organization that is, I really don’t know.”

Seeing Shizuo’s melancholic expression, Kasuka slowly nodded his head.

“I see….. excuse me, you must have remembered something unpleasant.”

“Don’t worry about it, we’re family, you shouldn’t be so formal.”

Shizuo said with a gentle smile, but the smile quickly turned into a worried frown as he asked.

“…..Speaking of which, you look troubled, have you contacted the police?”

The sudden change of topic towards herself caused Ruri to lose her composure – but she quickly recovered, and started to talk about the present situation.

“Yes…. but recently the key to my house has stopped working, I’m not able to go through the gate.”

“Can’t get into your house?”

If it was the stalker, then there would be cameras and wiretapping installed in the house, but why not let her enter the gate?

"Probably to upset me…. also these kind of things are happening everyday….. after the warning, the camera put on guard caught sight of a strange masked man, but the suspect still hasn’t been caught. The officers have started to patrol the area, but this time we recieved a picture of a scene, blood-stained cruetation crosses were thrown everywhere, and the bodies of monsters that I’ve played in movies were all piled together, notices of this picture were then posted up all over the place..…”

The mind of this stalker is really beyond comprehension, Shizuo asked another question.

“Wait, since the crime scene was photographed, wouldn’t the criminal be one of the staff?”

“The police also suspected that, but everyone had an alibi… As we investigated, the information seemed to have leaked to my fan-site somehow. At that time, the fans became frantic….. but, everyone had alibi’s.”

“This transfer of information on idols is apparently in Dollars. But after I tried to find the Dollars message centre, I realized there is a special invitation-only board. If you're not invited, you can’t go in to get information.”

Kasuka’s voice held no emotion, it was like a robot reciting data – but Shizuo, as his family member, noticed the subtle changes in his voice and expression.

“Though I know you’re worried, but calm down a bit, Kasuka. If you don’t calm down then you won’t be able to detect any hidden facts.”

Shizuo's recommendation is not what normal people would usually give.

"Yeah….. you're right, thank you."

Both Vorona, looking at them from her nearby location and Ruri reclining on the side hadn't sensed a hint of Kasuka's tense mood, and couldn't help but be puzzled by the behaviour of the 2 brothers.

Shizuo, ignorant of the 2 females' confusion, continued to speak.

"This isn't good, I'm no good in matters like this. If only there was someone familiar with Dollars…"

- Someone close to Dollars.
- Who would it be – a person that is most familiar with Dollars.

Suddenly, a person shows up in his mind, but he immediately destroys the image and waves it away.

- I'm not going to consider that guy.
- Ah, but Kururi and Mairu also seem to know a lot.
- But still, just letting those two meet Kasuka, they would definitely be annoying.
- The boss should know as well, but it's bad to always trouble him.

While Shizuo pondered, suddenly the features of a well-known Dollars acquaintance floated into his mind.

- I've also given that person trouble…..
- But, first I'll just ask to chat.

"I've got it, I know someone, I'll visit them now, do you want to come?"

"Is that okay? I'm not putting you through too much trouble."

"We're family, don't talk like we're strangers."

Hearing Shizuo use a teasing tone to say these tranquil words, Kasuka thought of the phrase which office workers like using: "I saw a rare scene", but Shizuo also noticed and quickly recovered his usual appearance.

Just as this occurred – a sound broke the silence.

“Meow.”

It was a cat.

“You’re up, Dokusonmaru”

Kasuka looks around and found the pet near his feet, then says to Shizuo.

“I just remembered, I also wanted to ask you.”

He had no expression on his face while he picked up the cat and transported him from the sofa to the box – inside, the cat curled around himself.

“Ruri is staying with us temporarily, in case she gets attacked by the stalker when we’re not there…… but the nearby pet house is already full, this cat can’t find a home.”

“So I wanted to find someone that can look after Dokusonmaru for a while.”

※※※※※

Shinra’s apartment, somewhere in Kawagoe

“Ah then, to have disturbed you, I’m extremely sorry.”

After their discussion, though there wasn’t really any progress, Anri started to pack her things to leave.

Though Celty thought that a lot could be speculated due to Mikado’s status as the leader of Dollars – but voicing this personally to Anri just didn’t seem right, so in the end she decided not to say anything. In fact, Mikado falling into a dangerous situation is really not unexpected, moreover the present situation doesn’t seem like an urgent threat.

But, because Mikado really is acting strange, Celty resolves to ask him if she bumps into him again.

Celty was lost in thought, then turned to Anri who was preparing to leave and told her.

“It’s late, it’ll be dangerous to go back, why not stay tonight?”

“Eh..… no, no. I’ve already imposed on you for so long..…”

Celty patted Anri’s shoulder, then lively typed on her PDA.

“Don’t worry. And it’s not the first time you stayed over, but if you don’t like staying over here then I guess it can’t be helped.”

“No, it’s not that. It’s definitely not because I don’t like it.”

“Then, I can give you my sleepwear….. the size should be alright.”

On the side, Shinra relished looking at the two “abnormalities” talking intimately.

In that moment, the doorbell rang.

Despite being a high-class apartment, there was no intercom installed at the entrance because it had been constructed early, instead a simple doorbell was placed at the household’s gate.

“Now who is it, it’s so late.”

- Maybe, it’s that Aoba boy?

Celty's heart couldn't help but worry as Shinra walked forward – but what appeared at the gate was a familiar presence, on his head however was something that one would never expect.

"Meow~"

Shinra, roaring with laughter was promptly kicked across the room by Heiwajima Shizuo. On seeing this scene, Celty also rejoiced quietly to herself since she had no head to laugh, but her shaking shoulders made her happy expression obvious.

Of course, she wasn't aware that the situation would become much more than anticipated.

Some day, chatroom

.

.

.

.

No one is in the chatroom.

No one is in the chatroom.

No one is in the chatroom.

----- Gaki has entered the chatroom -----

Gaki [Hello everyone.]

Gaki [Since no one is here, I'll simply bless for everyone's welfare.]

Gaki [Saika.]

Gaki [Sorry. I received this invite from Saika.]

----- Shoro has entered the chatroom ------

Sharo [Good evening.]

Gaki [Good evening.]

Gaki [Nice to meet you, are you a regular member of this chatroom?]

Sharo [Hello. No, I also got invited here.]

Sharo [It looks like the regular members haven't come yet.]

Gaki [Yeah, it's strange.]

Sharo [No, maybe we just have to wait for everyone to come.]

Gaki [Oh, I see (laugh).]

------ Pure Water 100% has entered the chatroom ------

Pure Water 100% [Hello everyone, I was also invited, can I join you guys?]

Pure Water 100% [I'll introduce myself, nice to meet you, I hope everyone is well.]

Pure Water 100% [A simple greeting, I didn't use polite speech. If everyone is an elder, please forgive me.]

Gaki [No problem, everyone here is seeking to be friends, so don't worry.]

Sharo [Right, age is irrelevant.]

Sharo [Looking at the chatroom record, Kyo also does as she likes.]

Sharo [Isn't it better not to have everyone using cautious words in a chatroom.]

Gaki [I'm not familiar, I treat everyone with polite speech.]

Pure Water 100% [Then I'll just talk like normal, haha.]

Sharo [My normal is casual (laugh).]

Pure Water 100% [Hah? (laugh).]

------ Saki has entered the chatroom ------

Saki [Good evening everyone.]

Saki [Bakyura invited me.]

Saki [I hope everyone is well.]

Sharo [Ah, good evening.]

Gaki [What's going on, it couldn't be that today is a party for the new people? (laugh).]

Pure Water 100% [Hello!]

------ Chrome has entered the chatroom ------

Chrome [Nice to meet you all, good evening.]

Chrome [Seems very lively.]

Chrome [I was also invited by a friend.]

Saki [Good evening.]

Gaki [Hello, hope your well.]

Sharo [Good evening. I only came on to give a greeting, but now it's become this lively.]

Sharo [Though, the most important thing is that the senior level characters for this chatroom aren't here wwwww.]

------ Bakyura has entered the chatroom ------

Bakyura [Good evening.]

Bakyura [Huh?]

Bakyura [What's with this?]

Saki [Welcome.]

Chrome [Good evening.]

Sharo [Ah, a senior level character has appeared.]

Gaki [This 'senior level' view is really disrespectful.]

Pure Water 100% [Good evening.]

Bakyura [It's lively.]

Bakyura [Sorry.]

Bakyura [Among all of you I only know Saki, so I'm a little anxious.]

Pure Water 100% [How cute! I really like these type of shy kids.]

Bakyura [Thank you, Thank you wwwww.]

Gaki [Say, inviting everyone here to chat is great and all, but what do the regular people talk about?]

Bakyura [Ah ah.]

Bakyura [Mainly exchange information relating to Ikebukuro.]

Gaki [I see.]

Pure Water 100% [Then, everybody is in Ikebukuro?]

Bakyura [Right now me and Saki are in another area.]

Bakyura [But we used to live in Ikubukuro.]

Gaki [My work is in Ikebukuro.]

Sharo [What, Gaki is already working?]

Gaki [No, I'm only doing some jobs. Forget it, everyone was asked to disregard age and those matters wwwww.]

Saki [That's right.]

Sharo [Ah, I looked at the previous chatroom record…. In the chat everyone was interested in the matter relating to Hijiribe Ruri's stalker.]

Sharo [They were wondering if the stalker is in Dollars?]

Sharo [I'm going to unnecessarily ask, is anyone here a Dollars member?]

Bakyura [All of them were urging that guy to stop it wwwww]

Sharo [Actually, what is Dollars like, is it good or bad?]

Chrome [I'm a Dollars member, though I only landed on the message board by accident.]

Gaki [I also landed on it by accident.]

Bakyura [Yah yah.]

Saki [Then, Bakyura and me will also join and have a look.]

Bakyura [You're joking wwwww.]

Sharo [I'm interested, I also know people who have joined.]

Sharo [But with how the situation is now, is it popular to become a Dollars member?]

Sharo [If it's popular, I also want to join Dollars.]

Bakyura [Popular?]

Chrome [Speaking of which, is the rumour about the stalker true?]

Chrome [If that kind of person came from the same association as me, too scary.]

Chrome [Moreover, it's as if the association doesn't want to hand its criminals over to the police.]

Gaki [I think as long as there's evidence, they'll definitely be results.]

Chrome [Actually, right now the Dollars site seems to have another exchange platform. It exchanges internal information about the organization, some say it also engages in illegal deals.]

Gaki [These really are despicable times.]

Chrome [During May, didn't that incident occur involving a gun fight between a criminal organization and a group of weird college students?]

Chrome [It's also said those college students traded narcotics through a Dollars network transaction, some of them were Dollars' members.]

Gaki [Something like that happened as well?]

Gaki [So Dollars have these kind of people?]

Bakyura [Let's not talk about this.]

Bakyura [Everyone should discuss their hobbies and interests.]

Bakyura [For instance, how about we recommend some nice meeting places in Ikebukuro or something.]

Gaki [You want to come to Ikebukuro?]

Bakyura [I'm giving suggestions.]

Pure Water 100% [Some meeting places, huh, I think Tokyu Hands is a good place.]

Bakyura [Ah, to go there I'll have to wait for a day I won't get tired.]

Chrome [If you want a place that isn't tiring, Seibu's Loft is not bad.]

Sharo [That place isn't bad, but it's inappropriate for a meeting place.]

Sharo [Compared to that, I think a place where it's easy to meet girls would be better.]

Pure Water 100% [Like at a department store?]

Shoro [It's a bit different. Though I like those places too, but the place I'm thinking of is different.]

Chrome [Are you talking about online dating sites?]

Sharo [Is that a place you can meet up with friends?]

------ Kyo has entered the chatroom ------

------ Mai has entered the chatroom ------

Bakyura [Yo.]

Chrome [Good evening.]

Gaki [Nice to meet you.]

Pure Water 100% [Good evening.]

Sharo [Good evening.]

Mai [Good evening.]

Mai [Wah.]

Mai [There are a lot of people.]

Kyo [Hello everyone, there are a lot of new people.]

Mai [Very lively.]

Mai [I'm happy.]

Kyo [Then, first I should propose a topic. It seems you guys were just discussing the matter about Hijiribe Ruri's stalker and Dollars…. well, recently it appears there are some internal disputes going on in Dollars.]

Gaki [Internal disputes? I haven't heard of this.]

Chrome [Me either, I haven't seen any information relating to this on the message centre.]

Kyo [It's not spread on the network, it seems it started two months ago, some guy who was using the Dollars name started to attack other Dollars members. They'll have a detailed printing tomorrow in the weekly release, someone who saw the incident beforehand said it.]

Gaki [Really? I'm a little interested.]

Gaki [Just what exactly is going on?]

Bakyura [It's a little unbelievable.]

Bakyura [From the beginning.]

Bakyura [This stuff about internal fighting.]

Bakyura [I remember the organization never had a coordinated form.]

Gaki [You have a point.]

Chrome [It makes me a little anxious.]

Sharo [It just seems like a dispute among a group of young rogues to me.]

Pure Water 100% [It's too scary, Chrome and Gaki haven't been attacked?]

Mai [Ah!]

Bakyura [Ah?]

Kyo [Sorry, beside me, Mai was startled, the chopsticks dropped.]

Kyo [Really, Dollars is like Japan's history, similar to the past communist party, it's original form was a loose organization used simply to exchange intelligence. However, the core of Dollars have started changing, only the inside has authority over the exchange platforms and the many split fields. It's like the Sengoku period in Japan, where various types of countries existed.]

Kyo [However among these, there were some especially violent countries. A newly built organization force then defeated them. Though nobody understands this new organizations position exactly, they are recognized by distinctive features. They wear unified clothing and a symbol, it apparently has a design characteristic of animals teeth…. and it's likely imported from overseas.]

Bakyura [Huh?]

Bakyura [Really?]

Kyo [What is it, did you think of something?]

Gaki [Oh, that, I also know of it.]

Gaki [You're talking about blue squares, in the past, a few of them particularly liked to wear those hats, but it was only a few of them.]

Bakyura [It's just a coincidence.]

Sharo [What's wrong? Could it be you know people who wear the same kind of hats?]

Bakyura [No.]

Bakyura [I got it wrong.]

Chrome [Don’t worry about it too much, there’s so many new people online today, why don’t we introduce ourselves first.]

Pure water 100% [Ok, then how about we all chat about our favorite TV shows?]

Pure water 100% [I like <<Bboy City>>.]

Gaki [I like everything.]

Bakyura [I……]

二章『現実@RISOURON』

# Chapter 2 “Reality @ RISOURON (Ideal theory)”

Apartment roof, somewhere in Ikebukuru

At the same time as Celty’s dilemma with a young girl’s trouble and a visit from Shizuo and his cat—

The boy, whom Sonohara Anri is worrying over though he doesn’t know it, is smiling in front of a different group of youths.

“Thank goodness, everyone’s okay.”

Ryuugamine Mikado calmly smiled, facing the boys with a faint expression, he said.

“Though, I guess you’d have to be in a really difficult position to get hurt, right?”

In an area that appeared to be an apartment roof, there were 5 other young boys about besides Mikado, in that bunch, only one of them was chatting with Mikado.

The other four were strolling around as they pleased, and unlike Mikado were not there for a specific purpose.

At night, with the rooftop lamps illuminating them, the people on the rooftop cut a ‘terrifying’ image.

After Mikado made sure the boys were alright, he felt relieved, then as if he wanted to re-confirm he said:

“Everyone didn’t come by today, but no one is hurt?”

Answering this question was the person standing in front of him – Kunamura Aoba, wearing his usual smile he nodded his head.

“Yup, my partners aren’t that stupid.”

“Saying that it’s stupid to get hurt is unreasonable.”

Mikado faintly smiled.

Aoba grasped the shark teeth patterned hat in one hand and asked:

“It’s already clear where that guy’s operating location is?”

“Yes….. searching the Dollars site. I found that Tsukumoya helped.”

“Isn’t Tsukumoya that weird guy that keeps posting on the announcement board.”

“Saying people are weird is also unreasonable. He might be a really accomplished person that sells books.”

Tsukumoya Shinichi, a Dollars member, an author that published <<Ikebukuro Counterattack>> and other related titles.

Though they’ve never met before, or even know each other’s real name, age, sex etc., in the past few days, Mikado has quickly consulted with him about any news concerning clubs using the name of Dollars to carry out threats.

Supervisors use Dollars to oversee conversations, then sometimes people are deployed to further monitor their actions.

He only lets Tsukumoya eavesdrop on initial announcements, he never tells him about any definite plans. Perhaps Tsukumoya also had some hunches, but he never says anything either.

From the initial establishment of Dollars, only Mikado remains. But through Mikado's point of view, he thoroughly approves of appointing Tsukumoya as a "Dollars supervisor".

- Tsukumoya joined..... at the beginning of last year's assembly.

Beside him, Aoba glances at Mikado immersing himself in his memories and says expressionlessly:

"Hmph…. if sempai trusts that person then there should be no problem...."

In fact, Aoba made his own independent investigation on Tsukumoya, but because members in Dollars don't meet face to face, he concluded that this person only used the network bulletin to name Dollars, so they haven't strengthened security.

The problem was – as Mikado has said, outside of the network, the fact is Dollars is relatable only to one boy's name.

"Actually it'd be good if I can just talk to Orihara-san… but recently I can't get in contact with him."

"There are also a lot of unauthentic people out there. Though we're trying to request help from Tsukumoya, we can't give someone we don't know too much trouble. At this rate we might even have to pay money. I think leaving this stuff to Izaya is better. But…. why is that."

"Being an informant, is it such a strange profession? He was even stabbed by a young rogue and nearly died."

Aoba narrowed his eyes, a hint of humour in his low voice. What had he found out? Aoba moved out of Mikado's line of sight, and openly displayed his hostility toward the man called Orihara Izaya.

Though he doesn't know if Mikado realizes his own subtle expressions, he shrugs his shoulders and again whispers.

"That's not right, even if you're joking you should be more cautious. Izaya is also interested in Dollars."

Ryuugamine Mikado forgot.

- "Don't get close to Orihara Izaya!"

The day he first moved to Ikebukuro, a close friend gave him that warning.

Maybe it was because according to him, Heiwajima Shizuo and Simon, as well as other people he was warned off of actually turned out to be very gentle people, so he took his friends warning lightly.

Or maybe it was because Izaya gave Mikado innumerable advantages, causing the boys' caution to lull.

Just like with the leader of the yellow turbans – Kida Masaomi.

Therefore, he hasn't realized, being near Orihara Izaya is a dangerous existence.

If he does start being suspicious of Izaya, he could investigate his past –

Then he'll know what Izaya did to Kida Masaomi in the past. Also, he'll know what Aoba's brother did to Kida too.

If that happens, he won't want to associate with Kunamura Aoba anymore.

Ironically, Mikado believes completely that Aoba regards his enemy, Orihara Izaya, as an ally, that's why he became Aoba's partner –

- But, how much does Mikado know about the strife concerning the blue squares and yellow turbans?

This is a question Aoba constantly asks.

Even if he clearly knew all the circumstances, will he decide to betray himself in the end?

- No, that's not possible.

At first, Aoba and Mikado were mutually using each other.

What was miscalculated – was Mikado as an opponent during the final dispute, he should be given an award, but how come he doesn't have that kind of atmosphere.

Ryuugamine Mikado always looks naïve.

On the contrary, it's because he has power and also possesses a high personal connection, that Aoba attempted to contact him.

However, if the simple and honorable Mikado is capable of stabbing someone, than ultimately he will obtain the leading power.

Since golden week, Aoba has had this thought.

But, he's since realized.

Mikado's strong, crazy heart is being surrounded by honesty and simplicity.

"Speaking of which, I heard Dollars has a Ruri fanatic… did you know?"

To Aoba's calm words, Mikado answered with the same smiling face he shows at school.

"Ah, I think so."

Smile.

It's like the gentle smile of acceptance.

It's not fake and isn't twisted maliciously.

Ryuugamine Mikado used this type of expression to answer.

"That type of person must be quickly excluded from Dollars."

High-class Apartment, somewhere in Ikebukuro

When Adabashi Kisuke's phone rang, it was just past 12.00 o'clock at night.

Inside his apartment, Hijiribe Ruri's voice rang out.

After a few seconds of allowing the timber sound to reverberate in his heart–

Adabashi slowly pondered to himself while pressing down on the 'receive call' button.

Suddenly, Ruri's singing stopped, his lips rose into a greasy smile.

"Hello? Hello?"

"……It's you."

On hearing Adabashi's answer, the man on the other line breathed a sigh of relief.

"Oh, good! You finally picked up your phone after half the day then you wouldn't talk. Can I ask, do you have a reason for that?"

"I was thinking."

"Huh?"

"Because Ruri's voice stopped suddenly. Using my hand."

"Oh."

Ignoring the phone's conversation, Adabashi recalled the feelings in his fingers and ears just a moment ago, his face was filled with his distorted pleasure, and passion surged repeatedly in the base of his belly.

"Ruri's voice, that beautiful soulful voice, was suddenly stopped by my thumb, as if Ruri's existence was destroyed. I'm just thinking about that, replying will stop it, that's right."

The person on the other line responded calmly to this unusual speech.

"Ah, I understand, I understand. Though my love isn't as deep as yours, but I can understand a bit… definitely worthy of Adabashi. Your father said the same."

"Don't.… compare me with that trash of a father."

As if in loathing, Adabashi anxiously replied.

He slowly narrowed his eyes, and started to mock his own father.

"He doesn't sleep with Mum or Ruri, but with a completely strange woman – a father that was easily killed by Ruri."

"No no, I think you know this, Ruri is not an ordinary girl, and as for your father being killed…"

"It's not like that. Him being killed isn't a problem, I actually envy that."

Adabashi remembered the scene when his father was murdered, he sighed dully.

"If there was a problem, it would be why my father would sleep with some strange woman. My mum is good, though my mum isn't young anymore. But, besides my mum, there's still Ruri. As long as there's Ruri, why would he sleep with a strange woman? That's weird!"

"So that's how it is! I see. I understand! I understand!"

Adabashi asked his energetic telephone partner:

"Hey, what do you want?"

"Ah, nothing really. Before we agreed that we would sell you the information on Hijiribe Ruri as the priority, but now I hope that you can do us a favour. Today, I'll ask you to fulfill my desire."

“…..What is it?”

“Ruri has apparently been in contact with Ikebukuro’s ‘headless rider’. Though it’s not clear what relationship they have together or if they’re doing something… when you confront Ruri, if you seem to find out anything regarding the ‘headless rider’, it’d be good if you tell me. Just tell me, that’s it. If you manage to successfully escape or stir up some trouble for them, I’ll give you a bonus.”

Adabashi knit his brows together from the man’s smooth words.

“So, compared to me, is the headless rider stronger?”

“Yes -- Adabashi-san…… like in a fight for instance ….., Wow, what is it? Who is that great champion, the one they call Dragon, he's truly formidable. Ah, you’ve never seen it before? It’s the headless rider!”

“…….”

Adabashi had seen the headless rider multiple times.

Though he’s only seen her riding on the motorbike, and can’t conclude whether she’s strong or not.

He heard a rumour that she’s not a scary person, and with what the telephone man had just said, he firmly believes it.

“….What’s wrong with the headless rider?”

“Nothing, nothing. It’s just that the headless rider’s actions lately have become very free. Our customers are all asking us “is that true?”

“…….”

“I am doing a business, whenever a crucial situation were to arise, my movements become restricted. So then I have to re-evaluate. Recently, I’ve also encountered a problem for simply trying to protect my own private business.”

Adabashi didn’t know what this guy was talking about.

But he had already resolved in his head, these things held very little importance to him.

Ruri contacted the headless rider.

Though he doesn’t know the situation, there’s only one thing to do according to his logic.

Whatever hindrance there is –

He will only love Ruri.

“Ah, okay. What else…… you have to tell me news about Ruri…..”

“I also want to request….. Jinnai-san.…”

※※※※※

Parking lot, somewhere in Ikebukuro

“Just because Kadota’s working the night shift, you guys slack off.”

Shutting down the car’s engine, Togusa, relaxing in his driver seat, stares through the rear-view mirror and says this to a man and woman in the back seat – Yamasaki and Karisawa.

The man and woman who were staring intently at opened books in their hands started to protest against Togusa.

“That is so rude! Today, I’ve scheduled 7 books that I still want to read!”

“I still have 4 books tonight!”

Togusa wanted to silence the protests, but the two of them started to purse their lips and refute.

“Oh – besides Togusa-san chasing after rent money, your slacking off time right now is a lot better than ours.”

“That’s right.”

“Idiot! What about sister in law’s empty apartment, running around the corridor and room’s is tiring, you know!”

“Didn’t you create that situation for your sister’s benefit?”

Togusa was speechless from Karisawa’s words.

“I heard that you’re working as a manager, brother, now is that legal employment?”

“That, that’s…. I, it’s that, it’s just for emergencies…..”

Togusa was mumbling ambiguously.

At this moment, his phone’s message ring was heard.

The ring tone was a Hijiribe Ruri song – Togusa held onto his phone until the whole song finished, and then answered.

“Really, I have to confirm some information, I’m very busy. Don’t disturb me.”

“Hey—wasn’t Togusa-san the one who disturbed our reading first?”

“Moreover, while saying you’re busy, you still listened to the whole ring tone till the end.”

In answer to Yamasaki’s obvious accusation, Togusa shook his head and stated: “You guys just don’t understand”, then like he was explaining basic knowledge he said.

“Idiot! How could I stop Ruri’s voice midway!”

Saburo Togusa normally always has a relaxed attitude towards Yamasaki’s otaku tendencies –

He only gets defensive when something involves his beloved car or the idol Hijiribe Ruri. There are times when Hijiribe Ruri sings in animation theme songs or something similar, Togusa and Yamasaki will then go shopping together and buy any commodity related to Hijiribe Ruri.

The mail that was sent seemed to involve Ruri, after fixing up his clothes, he opened up the message content.

“Wow… so great… so Ruri likes Scottish cats….”

Apparently it was a mail magazine of fan material, along with a thorough report, his face broke out into a relaxed expression that Yamasaki and Karisawa had never seen before.

“Ah…. I have to buy the photobook….! I have to buy the additional photo’s!”

“……Togusa-san, could it be you’ve decided to buy every single edition?”

Yamasaki asked frightened, Togusa turned towards him with a strange expression and replied.

“? Of course I am. Don’t you guy’s sometimes buy 2 manga books?”

“We do that in order to conserve one.”

“Buying a book every time a new edition comes out, it just can’t compare to anime.”

“Togusa, every time the car’s scratched you blow up in anger, you want to become even more evil!”

Togusa ignored the words that were being said in the back seat, he exited from his mail and opened his phones web, then accessed the Dollars site dedicated to Hijiribe Ruri called ‘Möbius loop’.

After the news of Hijiribe Ruri and Hanejima Yuuhei spread, the site became deserted. The fans who had adored the idol suddenly erupted with phrases like “traitor” “secondhand goods” “give me back the money I invested” as well as complaints against Hanejima Yuuhei, and people who liked to stir up trouble and so on – But, even though Togusa also received such a heavy blow at the news, he still couldn’t give up his fan status. This was simply because he believed wholeheartedly that the idol is still the idol. Though he was also shocked and envious, but “Hanejima Yuuhei…. if it’s that perfect superhuman, he’ll definitely be able to make Ruri happy even more than me, a good match, dammit….!” Saying these words allowed him to overcome all the hate messages written on the web, and continue to contribute to the site like normal.

Togusa had spent a lot of time like that, he was now a senior in the site and the fan club.

As an unwritten rule, Togusa and his fan friends use the mail magazines as an opportunity to exchange opinions –

Until he suddenly noticed someone else join in the messages, his expression darkened.

“This bastard… haven’t you had enough fun?”

“? What’s wrong?”

Yamasaki furrowed his brows and asked the obviously moody driver.

“It’s nothing…. before, I just thought a former colleague came back.”

“Colleague?”

“Ah, today he wrote “Are you interested in Hijiribe Ruri”? It has something to do with secret photos, he’s someone that always writes stuff like this. He calls himself the ‘sacrificial boy’, I don’t understand him.”

Responding to his angry heavy tone, Karisawa teasingly said.

“You say that – but aren’t you actually really interested? Hijiribe Ruri can’t talk about this secret.”

“Oi, call Ruri ‘-chan’ Ruri, Ruri ‘-san’, or Ruri ‘-sama’. How dare you address her like that.”

Both Karisawa’s and Yamasaki’s expressions froze, they could feel the start of a headache coming on from Togusa’s glowering.

“Too far! Generally speaking, did you always add surnames to people when she first debuted?”

“That was when I was still young. I didn’t understand Ruri-chan’s appeal.”

“It looks like we’ve gotten into something really troublesome, what do we do, Yamasaki?”

Yamasaki nodded his head in affirmation to the upset Karisawa and lost himself in thought, after a few moment he replied.

“Occasionally these types of people appear in serious fans. Ah, that’s right, it has the same ‘hook’ appeal as like a >, initially it would be in high demand, but become impossible to obtain.”

“Really? Then we can understand this a lot more.”

“Ah, wait, though I don’t really understand, but how do you place manga on par with Ruri-chan.”

Togusa's vein popped, but he felt that whatever confrontation he made, everything would simply go through one ear and out the other, so he brought his attention back to the images on his fan mail.

Yamasaki and Karisawa stared at the back of his head, then leaned in close together and started intimately discussing.

"Oh right, regarding Hijiribe Ruri…… chan, have you heard anything about a stalker?"

"There's also a rumour saying he's a dollars member."

"…..Just in my community, everyone's trying to find the truth in the rumours."

Though Togusa said this softly, it still leaked into the other's conversation. He let out a great big sigh, then promptly stated with murderous intent.

"If I ever find out where this guy is, I'll drive my car straight onto his bed and grind him up……"

Not knowing whether Togusa was really serious or not, Yamasaki and Karisawa said with unusually weak voices: "Then…. if your going to do that, please do it while we're not in the car."

Apartment Roof, somewhere in Ikebukuro

"What, it's Mum. Ah—, brother's come back."

Because Aoba abruptly answered the phone, he interrupted any possible greetings from the other end of the line.

He appears to be talking to his mother about a matter between brothers.

- It'll be bad if he interferes.

Mikado thinks, softly whispering a "goodbye" and waving to leave the roof.

"Ah, Mum, wait a moment…...., Mikado-sempai, I haven't said…"

"Talking tomorrow will be fine. You see, you have to treasure you mother's calls."

"Ah..… sorry. Then we'll talk about this another time."

Aoba instinctively bowed his head in acknowledgement, Mikado continued with his previous thoughts while leaving the roof gates.

'Come back to see' 'troublesome' 'planning'.

"Yeah, it is troublesome."

Toward a group of nervous and deeply bowing boys, Mikado replied like they were having a normal conversation.

While openly wearing a smiling expression as if they had all been friends for years.

When he arrived on the street after exiting the apartment, Mikado noticed 2 motorbikes stopped by the curb. It seemed that the 2 riders were currently having a dispute, Mikado felt it would be a bit problematic if he got involved, so he decided to take a detour.

"What were you trying to do? Huh!?"

"You guys would know!"

Listening to this typical aggressive conversation, Mikado shot a look at the 2 men.

One wore a jacket with a pattern printed on the back, the other was wearing black western style clothing, 2 really different riders. The black rider wore something that looked like a metal bangle, but it was too far to see the shape.

Perhaps this is where the bousouzoku fight.

His face displaying a sorrowful expression, Mikado escaped from the apartment.

※※※※※

Shinra's Apartment, along Sichuan Street

"Meow~"

A cat's small cry shifted the room's mood to a more comfortable atmosphere.

Ikebukuro's fighting doll and underground doctor, along with two famous and loved idols, a glasses girl with a secret and the headless rider, all of these people were not what would be considered as peaceful –

But though the cat doesn't understand this fact, his carefree nature allows the atmosphere in the room to be peaceful.

He had jumped off Shizuo's head and rolled around on the floor, at the moment, he was lying against Anri's thigh on the couch, sounds wheezing happily from his throat.

"…..Ah, where did you say?"

"I said Dollars, brother."

"Oh, that's right. I don't know the circumstances around Dollars. I thought Celty, who's more involved with Dollars would know more."

Shizuo visited intending to have a serious talk, but Shinra shook his head in consternation.

"So you're saying, because of that reason you and Kasuka…. and you even brought Ruri-chan, this is too much! You could have just mailed us!"

"Oh? Ah well, I saw that your light was still on from a distance. Uh, so I thought you were here and I came.…"

"….Sorry, have we troubled you?"

On seeing Ruri's huddled form, Shinra flustered and said.

"No trouble! It's the opposite! Celty and me are big Yuuhei and Ruri fans! If I knew you were coming I would've prepared a welcome, we would have waited for you before eating our roast turkey!"

"Thank you… thank you so much… last, last time we really gave you a lot of trouble."

"Huh? What time? Do you know each other?"

Shizuo's eyes moved between Shinra and Ruri. Because Ruri's voice was stuttering, Shinra stepped in and smoothly said.

"She got hurt before, the one who found her was Kasuka, but the one who fixed her up was me."

"Ah, that's right, you met Shinra in early spring…. but why didn't you see any doctor except Shinra?"

Shizuo tilted his head and asked, remembering the incident.

The cause for Ruri's injury was Shizuo, but Shizuo didn't know this. Also, once the truth is revealed, it will expose Ruri as the killer "Hollywood".

What can she possibly say? Just when Ruri anxiously started to attempt to confess everything and Shizuo bent down –

Kasuka abruptly interrupted.

"Because it's the art in living as a monster."

"I see, if it's like that then there's no helping it."

Shizuo crossed his arms and nodded, just how did he understand that?

"Ok, so that's the situation. We can't think of anyone else who understands Dollars. Also, we'll drop the cat off here."

"Yeah—though you say that. What about me. Also, the cat depends on Celty."

While Shizuo and Shinra carried on with their conversation –

The house's female occupants each held complex feelings.

Celty Sturluson.

Sonohara Anri.

Hijiribe Ruri.

These three people are all considered as "abnormalities" in modern society.

Celty's known as the 'headless rider' monster, Anri is the wielder of the sword 'Saika', and Ruri is the killing monster 'Hollywood'.

As soon as Ruri made an appearance at her house, Celty immediately noticed.

Shinra and Celty support the idol – Hijiribe Ruri.

Right now, this should be the first time they're meeting, but –

- She and I…… have met before?

She thought this with a confident feeling.

Firstly, from when she set eyes on Celty, her momentary shock was obvious. Though that kind of reaction at suddenly looking at the headless riders form was not uncommon.

And secondly, Celty could feel what she rarely ever felt in Ikebukuro, the breathe of a non-human.

She recalled the human that possessed this abnormal breathe – in the past I took her as transporting 'cargo'.

- No, but.
- Actually, that woman was wearing sunglasses and a hat that covered her face.
- But that person afterward's disguised herself as the headless knight to save me…..
- That person is the idol Ruri, Shizuo's brother's girlfriend?
- ……

- What is the meaning of this!?

Celty's emotions were swirling around inside while simultaneously looking calm on the outside.

On the other side, sitting in the dining hall next to Yuuhei, Ruri is also quietly thinking of Celty.

- What to do?
- I didn't know the headless rider lives at the Doctor's house.
- The time when I was a guest here is going to be exposed…

Though she regrets concealing the truth, she has no idea how to resolve it now.

Thinking about the situation, she tried to cover her anxiety, and keep her attention centralized on Shinra and Shizuo's conversation.

Then there was also Sonohara Anri, who doesn't know about the relationship between the other two –

Celty and her discovered Ruri's inhuman existance through different means.

The moment Anri saw Shizuo, the sound of the sword in her body suddenly acted up.

Anri always ignores that sound, but when Ruri got closer, the sword's sound started to mutate.

Puzzled.

Saika, who likes cutting all humanity equally, one moment ceased the constant sounds of love, and whispered in Anri's heart:

- "Is she human? Or monster? Do I love her? Or do I not love her? Is that child human?"

The unanswered 'question' reverberated over and over in her brain.

- What's the reason…..?
- Then, Ruri-chan…. isn't human?
- Celty's realized this..…

Three women thinking three different thoughts, and mutually sneaking glances at one another.

Anri who is observing as the neutral standpoint between Celty and Ruri, feels some tension from the other two and thinks they might perhaps have had an incident.

Anri wants to continue observing, but –

But suddenly she got distracted, because on her leg, Dokusonmaru slowly got up and started using its paws to climb up her uniform.

"Yah!"

Dokusonmaru crawled onto her chest and pressed along her bosom.

Anri's collar hung loosely, and she had a flustered appearance.

The cat fussed around on her chest, creating a lovable and cheery picture.

おおお

Because the room's occupants consisted of Shizuo, who's only interested in older women, Shinra, who's obsessed with Celty, and Kasuka, who's like a log, she wasn't so nervous. It was silent besides Dokusonmaru's constant "Meow~, meow~" sounds resounding in the room.

However, because Shizuo caught sight of Anri's flustered expression, he suddenly recalled something.

"Ah, that's right, that's right. There's a student who's always together with this young girl? The one that ate hot pot that time. Ryuugasaki… no, he's called Ryuugamine?"

"Ah? Yes, Ryuugamine Mikado."

"Yeah, yeah, it's at the time there were a lot of fights during golden week, I told that student I wanted to leave Dollars…"

"Ah?"

"Ah?"

- Ah?

Shinra, Celty and Anri, three peoples different thoughts united together.

They thought, 'this might be related to what we just discussed with Anri about Mikado acting weird'.

"Leave Dollars…., this is the first time I've heard of this. Why?"

"Is it that surprising?" he asked Celty, Shizuo tilted his head, and carelessly explained why he wanted to quit Dollars.

"Not much, I think it's troublesome, I can't be in the same team as guys who kidnap girls, but, I also didn't know how to properly quit, so I thought I'll just tell somebody first… At the park I occasionally go to, I told Ryuugamine I quit Dollars."

Listening to that, Celty thought.

- If it's Mikado, people quitting Dollars would feel like a blow to him.
- No matter who's quitting, they'll all hurt him, plus Shizuo has a name within Dollars.
- Is it because of this that he changed…?

She was trying to guess, but thought it was too arbitrary, therefore denied this idea.

If it was like that, he would change, but he'd likely become more depressed.

Not change in order to allow more people to attack.

"Forget it, when the opportunity arises, we'll just ask him. Mikado is still a kid, we shouldn't let him be involved in these matters."

"Yeah, right, as much as you can is fine, I requested."

Shizuo said, holding a tea cup to his mouth – but then Shinra suddenly spoke the most inopportune words.

"I think asking Izaya would be the fastest. As long as you're honest, you can work hard together. What do you think?"

'Crack!' the cup Shizuo was holding broke apart and multiple shards fell.

Tea spilled over his hands and knees, Shizuo's face twitched and after a few seconds said.

"…..Sorry, I can compensate, Celty."

“Huh? How come not to me, you only apologized to Celt—Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Shinra had tilted his head, Shizuo pinched the side of his neck and pulled it towards the ceiling.

“Regardless if it’d be good or bad….. I have never been on good terms with that flea!”

“Calm down, brother.”

“……I know, excuse me.”

At the moment, Shizuo had the urge to throw Shinra out the window, Kasuka admonished his brother without showing a hint of expression on his face, but Shizuo slowly returned the doctor to the floor.

- It’s like a beautiful maiden taming a wild animal.

Though Celty thought that, she would never say it out loud, she simply typed on her PDA to scold Shinra.

“You said completely unnecessary words, I hope you’ve learned something!”

While reproving him, Celty thought.

In fact, she had heard the rumours but… Izaya has reappeared?

However Celty had not seen Izaya recently.

- Speaking of that, wasn’t he stabbed and hospitalized?
- He hasn’t contacted since.

The television station actually had a report headline “Stabbed patient vanished!?”. But because Celty hadn’t seen it, she simply continued to think “I haven’t had any work requests lately”.

Just like this, when you want to use him he’s not here, he’s really unnatural.

- When he’s here, he’s just a troublesome guy, but when he’s not here it’s also inconvenient.
- …..Saying such words, sorry.

Thinking this, Celty pondered again about the present situation, but – almost like he intentionally wanted to mess up her thoughts.

“Meow ~”

At unexpected times, Dokusonmaru cries out cutely.

As if he wanted to use his sound to erase the dark atmosphere surrounding people.

※※※※※

Apartment, somewhere in Shinjuku

A boy looking at a chatroom record – Kida Masaomi, sat beside his roommate, a young girl, Mikajima Saki, and said with a serious expression:

“Hey, Saki.”

“What is it, Masaomi?”

Saki responded slowly and happily, Kida wanted to say something and hesitantly opened his mouth:

“Do you want to go to Ikebukuro?”

“You must be a superhuman….. but we don’t have to go right now, we’ll go tomorrow.”

“Your worried about the recent chatroom record. It’s Dollars’ business. It’s Dollars’ and Blue squares’ business.”

“You say that so easily, while me with my big mouth and familiarity can’t find any words at all.”

Blue squares –

At some point in the past, Kida along with his middle school colleagues decided to create ‘the yellow turbans’ to contend with them, and become another of the so-called colour gangs that exists in Ikebukuro.

For Kida, anything even related to the name of Blue squares is attached immediately to a feeling of loathing, especially to those that broke Saki’s legs. But, Saki quietly smiled, and using a voice that was trying to soothe Kida, said:

“I don’t really remember. I feel like that time was just a fast-moving dream.”

Looking into Saki’s sleepy eyes, Kida thought she was lying. Heard through his phone, the immediate scream he heard in the instant Saki’s leg got broken still rings inside Kida’s heart continuously. However, instead of disagreeing with her, Kida quietly sighed.

“If it’s like that then it can’t be helped, you’ll probably also end up forgetting all the times you’ve spent with me.”

“That’s not a problem, right now we’re doing new things.”

“You’re just boasting!”

Kida laughed bitterly and shook his head.

“In the chatroom record, Gaki said it was a guy wearing a shark teeth patterned hat…. It’s true that only blue squares has this. But he didn’t see… if that guy's the same as yellow turbans, if he wants to take control of Dollars, then I can’t sit by and do nothing.”

“Why does Masaomi want to go? For your friend?”

“That’s only one reason…. for me as well, I still have something to settle with Blue squares. Listen to me, though I don’t know when you’ll forget me… but if it something like that happens, I can’t abandon that part of me.”

Kida stared at Saki and said this with desolation. While Saki stared back at Kida wearing a worried looking smile, a smile that seemed to forgive everything.

“I know I can’t stop you, that’s why I didn’t urge you. But I do think it’s really dangerous so I don’t want you to go.”

“How cunning. Are these words you real feelings?”

“Even my cunning is ineffective. I’m only always waiting.”

“Waiting for me to come back?”

As if she was reproving Kida, Saki gently shook her head.

“I’m waiting for Masaomi to change back to how he used to be when he loved talking and laughing.”

“……..You really are cunning, Saki.”

Kida leaned his face closer to Saki’s, hit his forehead against hers and said.

“Don’t worry, I’ll find the way back, I’ll take Saki and we’ll go back there together.”

“Whether you do find the way back or not, the most important thing is that you’ve decided to try.”

“……Ah, I….. still have to go back to Ikebukuro. Because that place, I have to introduce myself to your people and introduce you to my people.”

Kida recalled his friends, a boy from his childhood and a girl with glasses.

“That, is it your Father and Mother?”

“Wha…! It’s still too early! That, though we’re no longer students, but, at our age, our age……”

“I’m joking. Is it your childhood friend and my love rival?”

For a few moments, Kida pretended ignorance to the understanding smiling young girl, but soon gave up, deeply sighed and said.

“Saki is cunning, after all.”

Somewhere in Ikebukuro

“Yo, isn’t it Ryuugamine-kun?”

“Ah…”

In the middle of Mikado’s route home, someone unexpectedly greeted him – it was Kadota dressed differently from his normal attire.

Mikado didn’t know for what purpose, but the work clothes Kadota wore had Chinese calligraphy printed on his coat, and he carried a bag of what appeared to be tools.

“Kadota-san, hello, long time no see.”

“Yeah, what are you doing out so late?”

“Nothing much, I just came back from a friends house. Kadota-san, you’re still working at this hour?”

“Ah, right now I’m on break from my night shift. After I eat, I’ll have to go back to the unit.”

For Mikado, besides Kadota once being a member of blue squares, he’s also the person Mikado associates with most in Dollars.

It felt like a new experience for Mikado looking at Kadota without Yamasaki and the gang with him, but Kadota still acted the same, while walking and talking together, Mikado asked:

“Ah yeah, are you still continuing Dollars?”

“Huh? Of course.”

“? Really? Recently there have been a lot of people using Dollars status to do weird things. In May, there was also that dispute with Toramaru.”

“Really, please stop. Don’t quit Dollars just because of these small matters. Also, we already know the the guys who used Dollars to do those crimes… I don’t acknowledge what those guys did as part of Dollars.”

Kadota said this plainly to Mikado.

“But, Dollars theme is that you’re free to do whatever you want.”

“Because you can freely do whatever, you can also freely denounce the criminals.”

Though Kadota could see the boys’ mixed feelings, he’s still unaware of the reason behind those mixed feelings, so instead thought to change the subject.

“That guy, Kida, have you been in touch lately?”

“…..We have contacted….. on-line… occasionally.”

Kadota looked at Mikado’s sad expression and replied unconcernedly.

“Is that so.… Though I don’t know why he disappeared from Ikebukuro, or what his mail is. But, as long as he’s still healthy, it’s fine.”

Kadota didn’t know that Mikado is the founder of Dollars.

Though Kadota only knows that Mikado is a good friend of Kida Masaomi, and also an acquaintance of Celty’s acquaintance, he won’t pry in it too deeply. However, Kadota had heard of the rumour that Kida left school and disappeared, and felt that the city without Kida was a little lonelier.

“Don’t worry about it too much, that guy has his own problems.”

Not prying further, he just said this –

But Mikado moved forward, and enthusiastically replied.

“No problem, as long as there’s people like Kadota, then there’s no problem!”

“Huh?”

“Because Kadota is a respected character in Dollars.”

“Oh, spare me.”

I reply to Mikado’s words, Kadota sighed.

“It’s like a fan passed a message saying I was an influential member, Dollars is just a free-for-all organization, nobody has any higher value.”

“Though it is like that, if there’s more people like Kadota and Celty. No more people would use Dollars for crimes, if one person helps another person’s problem mutually then the group would be good.”

- It sounds like the perfect organization, but movement and expressions would become restricted.

Kadota thought this, but didn’t directly refute Mikado, instead he used a more roundabout route.

“Is that your ideal? That doesn’t mean it’s the ideal of others.”

“Yes, it’s my ideal.”

Mikado frankly acknowledged, then said:

“But, I want to change close to this ideal, this is also a freedom given by Dollars that I can accomplish…..”

Mikado looked in a different direction, then temporarily became quiet. Kadota thought he should probably say something, but his mouth was blocked, it was Mikado wearing his usual gentle smile that said.

“Then, my house is here, bye.”

“….Ah, bye.”

Saying farewell at the intersection, the former senior student and the enrolled student of Raira Academy parted ways.

Kadota couldn't forget the strange feeling Mikado just gave him, he continued to think about what he felt – quickly, someone else came to his mind.

- Mikado seems to know Izaya… hope it won't be the same as Kida that time, that guy teaches people bad things.
- But Izaya doesn't have time to play with students.

While he was walking towards the unit, he thought about his student days.

For Kadota, who was still unaware of Mikado's true identity, he didn't implicate Izaya too deeply.

- Thinking about it, recently I haven't heard news about Izaya.
- Awakusu-kai will get angry, as long as he's not buried underground somewhere, it's fine.
- Perhaps for him, this is a satisfying life.

While thinking these uncomfortable thoughts, and also thinking this is the end for Izaya, Kadota kept walking.

At this time, a motorbike zoomed passed beside Kadota.

"……"

Spotting the rider's jacket, Kadota knitted his brows.

"Weird. After that white motorbike came, it's rare to see..…"

He said to himself, continuing to look at the motorcycle and walk.

"Just then, that was Dragon Zombie's jacket."

※※※※※

Russian Sushi Restaurant, Ikebukuro

"Come, customers, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, please keep coming—. Wish you keep good sleep—."

Simon was saying this to the pack of final guests.

Already having put down the cloth with the shops name, the only work remaining was cleaning up the shop.

Occasionally people milled around the area limping from a hangover, compared to daytime, this wasn't very suprising. In this kind of surrounding, he noticed something on the street move, and rapidly looked around.

Just then there was someone running past, a piece of black clothing could be seen just vanishing from Simon's view.

"…….?"

He felt that the ordinary drunkards and this late nightwalker were different, so Simon moved forward in that direction to look closer–

"What are you doing, Simon. Hurry up and start cleaning!"

The sound came from inside the shop. Simon shrugged his shoulders and headed back inside.

The one spying all of this from a street crevice –

Was a man who grinned while whispering.

“Seems like I can solve the conflict using Awakusu-kai. Now just how should I do this.”

He put on a frivolous summer coat and continued talking to himself.

“Though, that Russian’s daughter has become Shizu-chan’s subordinate.”

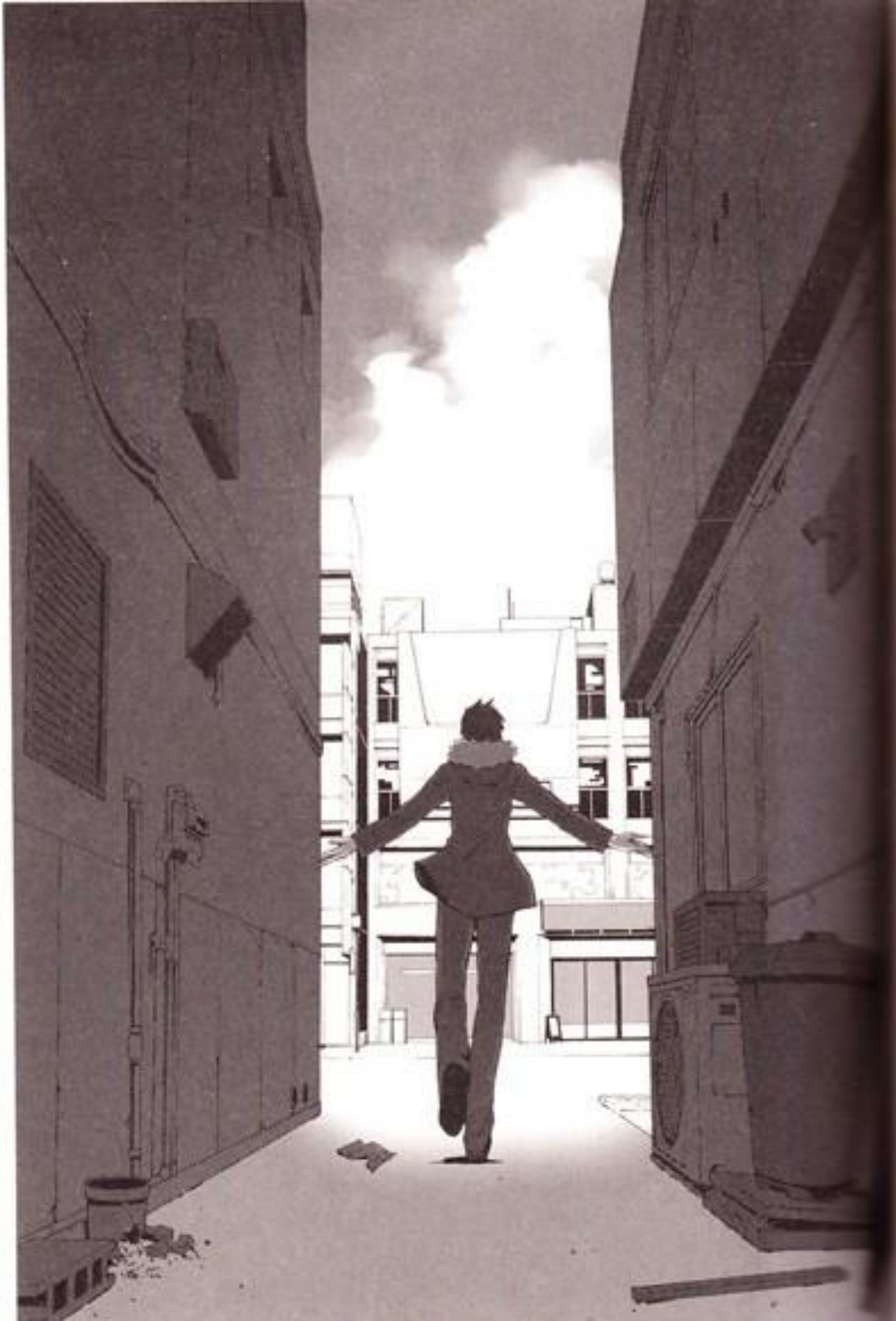
Covering his anxious feelings, the coated man slowly left.

“After all, human’s are so interesting.”

The man smiled coldly and happily skipped along an empty road.

Very, very happily.

He was skipping like a kid rushing towards an excursion bus.



Chatroom

Kyo [I feel like I know who Shoro is.]

Mai [Really?]

Sharo [Really? Oh crap.]

Kyo [To be frank, it is the actress Sharon Stone.]

Sharo [That's only the name's meaning!]

Mai [Hah!]

Sharo [If Sharon Stone was actually here, and talking in Japanese on top of that, I would explode!]

Kyo [Are you the substitute actor Charon Walken? Wah! That's great! I saw all the movies you participated in!]

Sharo [Who's that!]

Mai [Foreigner.]

Sharo [I know that! I know he's a foreigner! But who's the foreigner!]

Kyo [Search the web!]

Sharo [Hah!]

Kyo [You're really worth teasing, Shoro. If I actually knew your identity, I wouldn't expose it, was it me who didn't thank you for the polluted tea? This is my first time meeting you online, if you give me time to find out your real status, I'll be very happy.]

Mai [Well done.]

Sharo [I haven't done anything!]

Saki [Charon Walken is a very famous substitute actor in America. He's the younger brother of the actress Claudia Walken. Because he's a substitute actor, he's rarely seen on the media…. he's very similar to the actor Hanejima Yuuhei.]

Sharo [Thank you for the information. I see now, it's someone famous.]

Kyo [Ah ya ya, how come you speak so differently to us? People who dub-divide the way they treat others end up not trusting anyone! So even if it's all lies, if you should act that you're inferior, then our existence will become greater, and you should worship our words and use polite speech from now on.]

Mai [Great!]

Sharo [Little jokes!]

Saika [Fighting isn't good.]

------Gaki has entered the chatroom------

Gaki [Good evening.]

Kyo [Peace, Gaki.]

Mai [Good evening!]

Sharo [Hello!]

Gaki [I agree with Saika.]

Saika [Good evening.]

Gaki [Though I think this is an ordinary conversation between colleagues, but, we've only met for a short time (laugh).]

Gaki [I'm scared that you might really start to quarrel (laugh).]

Sharo [Agreed.]

Mai [Sorry.]

Kyo [Ah ya ya, it seems I've taken my teasing on Shoro too far and I've forgotten the network etiquette. I truly apologize…..]

Saika [Sorry.]

Gaki [Why is Saika apologizing (laugh).]

Saika [Thank you.]

Gaki [No no, please don't mind.]

Sharo [Speaking of which, I remembered Hanejima Yuuhei.]

Sharo [His girlfriend Hijiribe Ruri, seems like she has a lot of stalker fans.]

Gaki [Really?]

Gaki [Is there any news?]

Sharo [No, I heard it today from everyone else. Apparently, a long time ago there was a stalker fanatic.]

Sharo [On the internet, it seems there is also this rumour.]

Kyo [Ah…. I also know of this rumour.]

Saika [Sorry.]

Saika [I have to leave first.]

Sharo [Okay.]

Mai [Good night.]

Saika [Gaki, sorry.]

Saika [It's rare that you visit.]

Gaki [Don't mind (laugh).]

Gaki [When you're sleepy, then sleep takes first priority. Except when you're dying.]

Kyo [Ah ya ya, the evening has just started, are you really wasting it? But I won't obstruct you. For humans, the most relaxing time is when you're sleepy and you crawl into bed and fall asleep. Actually, when people are dying and they say 'I feel like sleeping', it is to relax the pain registered in the brain while dying, and maybe to feel content again.]

Kyo […. The times I make lengthy speeches, ignored by Gaki.]

Mai [It has meaning.]

Mai [Ah.]

Mai [Kyo, it's really melancholy beside you.]

Mai [Hurts.]

Mai [I was pinched.]

Saika [Good Night.]

-----Saika has left the chatroom-----

Gaki [Good night.]

Sharo [Oh right, relating to Hijiribe Ruri, what does Kyo know?]

Kyo [Sorry, because Mai told lies, I had to teach her a lesson. Yes, what I know, it was at the same time the news covered their scandal about the photographed kiss… but these pictures weren't reported on the news and isn't Hijiribe Ruri together with Hanejima Yuuhei, it was only a picture of a mysterious man.]

Kyo [ **O** 🖫🗀 please click on the following link, the picture's inside.]

Gaki [Then, I'll go see.]

Sharo [Oh – what I heard was also like this.]

Kyo [It might be Hanejima Yuuhei's fanatic. Regardless of how you look at it, the picture looks like a shot of royalty….. makes people believe he's a homosexual fanatic.]

Shoro [But, why does he harass Hijiribe Ruri? She's already kissed Hanejima Yuuhei? Is the love like a relatives? Any normal person would have given up.]

Kyo [It's because he's unable to give up so he's become a fanatic, right? This so-called love is really just to satisfy one's selfish desires. The form of someone's love is free service to the other person, and by seeing the other smile, it enriches your own feelings—a fanatic's behaviour will also give the other reverse service.]

Kyo [Fanatics also have a lot of types. There's the type that believes that they are completely made for the other, they don't think about anything. There's the type that want to control the one they love for themselves. There's a type that believes love is lofty but still takes action and eventually starts to want to see the others loathsome expressions, and then there's the type with a distorted love that depend on destruction to achieve their desire.]

Gaki [The last one is by no means love, it's only sexual desire.]

Gaki [Unfortunately, these type of people are not uncommon in the world.]

Sharo [If this guy also has possessive desires, he might also want to kill Hanejima Yuuhei. Isn't that really dangerous?]

Mai [I don't want that.]

Mai [Can't let Yuuhei get killed.]

Kyo [Calm down, Mai. Yuuhei-san isn't the type to submit to that kind of fanatic. He will use his own financial resources, guts, influence, personal connection and so on to protect his most precious person and himself. The fanatic will die. Soon, his corpse will hang from the top of Tokyo tower.]

Mai [Great!]

Sharo [Hanging from Tokyo tower would obstruct business!]

Sharo [But, I heard the fanatic is also a Dollars member.]

Sharo [Dollars won't want to safeguard the fanatic.]

Sharo [I never thought of that before. Because Dollars has never become a real violent gang.]

Sharo [Or it can be said, this fanatic's character, just happened to be in Dollars as well, you can't say all Dollars members are safeguarding him. I've heard members include elementary students, housewives, and even police personnel.]

Sharo [It feels incomprehensible, the Dollars mass organization.]

Sharo [I've also heard rumours relating to their leader.]

Gaki [Ah! I thought there was no leader?]

Kyo [Yeah, I also heard that Dollars has no hierarchy, only a mass organization where everyone is equal…..]

Mai [Are you lying?]

Sharo [I'm not lying! I heard that a guy in jail called Horada said it.]

Sharo [Ah, oops.]

Sharo [I said his real name, erase this section.]

Sharo [Or forget it. After all, it's a guy serving his time.]

Gaki [Can you inform us of the details.]

Sharo [Ah, about Horada?]

Sharo [Where my friend lives has a lot of young hoodlums, I heard the rumours from them….. that guy called Horada said in prison: "I know the Dollars leader", but apparently he never gave the name.

Sharo [I also heard after he came out of prison, he wanted to threaten the Dollars leader through the network, in order to coerce some money. This news I heard recently when I actually went to jail to see a friend that just finished his sentence. No matter what rumours fly around, it's a mystery.]

Kyo [You also have a very dangerous friend.]

Sharo [But I'm really honest and pure, you can view me as a really good person.]

Kyo [Lies.]

Sharo [What!?]

三蔵『夢想無双@IMAMUKASHI』

# Chapter 3 “Unparallel Hopes @ IMAMUKASHI (Present Time)”

A young girl is having a dream.

A dream she personally fantasized.

Hijiribe Ruri lived in a small remote town in Kanto.

The young girl was born in a large house situated in a small town filled with old buildings that have remained since the Meiji era.

However, after her father and grandfather’s enterprise failure, that house was mysteriously burnt down.

Her mother went missing, and until now the place where the house existed remains as charred wood.

A young girl without a home to return to.

Even so, she still has dreams.

Seen on TV, and in some movies, humans wearing monster costumes.

Since an early age, Ruri has been attracted by these ‘abnormalities’ –

Thinking about it, her ‘grandmother’ might have held the same longing.

“Ruri, why do you wish to take this path?”

Just starting on the path of a make-up artist, her teacher Zakuroya Tenjin asked her this question. Though at the time Tenjin was simply interviewing a pupil and stating “Ah, how cute! You’re hired.” – though his make-up skills were unusual and the way he spoke could be confused for sexual harrasment, he had never laid his hands on Ruri.

That was the first time the teacher asked this question – and now again as Ruri was using her own hands to compose a monster mask.

Perhaps it was because of this that Ruri’s perception changed or maybe working on the make-up itself affected her emotions, Zakuroya Tenjin re-asked this question while focusing on his own monster mask.

“That…..”

Ruri, being asked the same question twice was confused for a moment, but decided to give an honest answer.

Having been born with a name of a famous aristocratic family, her life has always been filled with a melancholy air, she has no idea where this hope for pure ‘destruction’ comes from, or the pure excitement she feels while creating monster symbols.

Using her own hands, this excitement toward monsters protects her happiness.

Also, she wishes these monsters do the things she can’t.

So she said this all out, but she still had something to say.

“…. Also, it might be because of my grandmother.”

This was the first time she told someone of her innermost feelings – the things that until now she was unable to say, flowed naturally from her mouth.

The ‘Hijiribe’ family company collapsed because of her grandfather and father’s business failure, though both grandfather and father became Hijiribe through marrying the family daughters.

Grandfather seemed uncomfortable being idle, eventually he began to change and treated Ruri very gently. In the past, he was the type of person to give Ruri a silent pressure, but after the family business declined, he would frequently talk about Grandmother.

- “You’re growing up to be just like your grandmother.”

Right after he started saying these kind of words, he continuously told them how much he loved his wife, where he went traveling with his wife, told them all types of stories, all of their dreams and so on.

Thinking back on it, it was really strange.

Regarding the most important history of their love, he never said a word.

The townspeople had a sense of fear towards her grandmother.

However – Ruri had never even seen her grandmother’s face before.

The house had many pictures of grandfather.

But not one picture of her grandmother. Moreover she hasn’t heard anything about their divorce.

In that house, not a trace of her grandmother’s existence could be found.

Father had said “it’s because she lost interest in grandfather, she left”.

Mother had smiled and told her “If you be a good child, then you’ll be able to meet her”.

Then one day, children in her town said these words to Ruri.

- “I know! Your grandmother was a monster!”

In her grandfather’s stories, whenever he talked about grandmother, there wasn’t anything about monsters.

Her grandmother was said to have treated her careless grandfather gently, always smiling, someone who always cared for others. That was Ruri’s impression.

However, the boys joked that that kind of grandmother was a monster, and also joked that the granddaughter Ruri is also a monster.

Being told this by people who didn’t know anything, Ruri –

Was Happy.

She didn’t know what kind of monster.

She also didn’t know why people were calling her grandmother a monster.

However, though on the surface Ruri looked angry, inside she was delighted.

She felt as if she was being wrapped by a soft warm blanket of relief.

The creature people see on TV that breaks everything.

Monsters who have so much ‘freedom’ for destruction.

She felt so close to that type of existence, her presumption of her grandmother started to expand.

Grandfather tenderly said she was a woman that is gentle to anyone, the townspeople said she's a monster, an existence that is frightening.

A person with contradictory characteristics, and no means to find a specific description to find out her true character.

Towards her grandmother, whom she doesn't even have a picture of, Ruri holds a sentiment like that of yearning.

The television shows various monsters.

She herself can't become a destructive and free being.

She continued maintaining her own existence, bridging between fantasy and reality.

"Really, Really? So that's how it is."

Listening to the fluent words, her teacher nodded his head while using his hand to feel the mask Ruri was making.

"Though it's a monster, it actually looks very warm. I agree. If it's you, then one day you'll make the appearance of your grandmother you've never even seen.

Saying these abstract words, Tenjin happily changed the subject.

"Right now there's a really interesting show called Carmilla Saizou, the boy acting the leading role is really interesting. A guy who's callous but actually very warm."

Tenjin, who was acting abstract, turned toward Ruri and said without hesitation:

"That boys mask, you do it. Make a great vampire!"

From there, because Ruri's work on <<Vampire Ninja Carmilla Saizou>> was recognized by the world, she was sponsored by "World Cinema Alliance" as a uniquely selected 'make-up artist' out of hundreds of others, sharing the honor with her teacher Tenjin.

That changed her destiny once more.

"Nice to meet you, I am Kujira from Yodogiri Shining Corporation."

A beautiful woman wearing expensive-looking glasses and western style business clothing appeared, it was not long after this happened.

The woman called Kujira introduced them, while Ruri sat in a very high-class vehicle.

- Inside sat an old gentleman waiting for her.

"Well well, nice to meet you, I am Yodogiri."

After the gentleman called Yodogiri carelessly greeted her, he offered Ruri another 'path'.

"My hunters excitedly came to me with your photo. It was the photo of "The special make-up artist worth anticipating" published in the movie magazine a few days prior. So I came."

Ruri didn't understand why she was brought to the car, she tilted her head and continued to listen to the man's words.

There wasn't a problem.

Yodogiri just saw the photo and wanted to make her a model.

At first, Ruri continuously refused.

She didn't think she was suited to being a model so she kept shaking her head, however –

A few words from Yodogiri reached her heart.

"You're very good at creating monsters."

"This time, do you want to become the monster idol, and spread your wings into the world?"

※※※※※

"……!"

With a silent yell, Ruri's whole body trembled.

"……..?"

At that moment, she realized she was sitting on a chair, and had just experienced a shallow dream.

"Are you alright?"

Yuuhei asked from beside her and carefully observed her face.

Shinra, Shizuo, Celty and Anri also looked at her with worried expressions.

"Ah, er…. Sorry…. I distracted everyone, you were all talking about important things….."

"Don't be stubborn. You haven't slept for days. "

As Yuuhei indifferently said this, Shinra smiled and added.

"If there are any important matters, you should sleep on it, I had thought up a lot of 4 character idioms, explaining them afterwords. If you want to sleep then there's no helping it. Speaking of 4-character idioms, you are sleep-learning!"

"Was that funny?"

"You're horrible, Celty. Even reluctant, you should laugh!"

"Your sense of humor even loses to your father. You have the same slowness as that gas mask man."

Celty shrugged her shoulders, Shinra saw this and looked like he had received a fatal blow, he lay down dramatically on the table top and started complaining about his father.

Looking at the warm scene, Ruri's thoughts drifted back to the continuation of her dream.

※※※※※

After receiving Yodogiri's tempting offer, Ruri finally became a model as a side job.

A dream, it's twisted.

It's being twisted.

Even so, for her, a dream is a dream.

She, who understood she couldn't become a monster, but worked at creating monsters –

She was already becoming a creature with power – in the form of an idol, she's an existence that can exert influence on her surroundings, then will get somewhat closer to her grandmother.

Being thrown into the human world again, she understood that this skill is not that easy.

While thinking this, Ruri absolutely wouldn't look at this skill as easy.

With these kind of feelings, she felt indecisive about the honeyed words the man called Yodogiri had said.

Actually, at first she wanted to complete her job.

Model became idol, her concerts were full of the audiences spirit.

Because numerous people supported her, she temporarily forgot her dream.

Even if she doesn't become a monster, she thought she would still obtain formidable strength. Though she thought she'd be closer to her scary grandmother whom she loved, she gradually left behind the shadow of the 'monster' in her heart, and simply filled herself with gratitude towards Yodogiri.

However – Yodogiri didn't forget.

Throughout the deepest parts of her heart is a monster.

Also, Yodogiri alone knew.

Hijiribe Ruri truly holds the blood of a monster.

"Do you have any contact with your family?"

"? No…."

Because her grandfather and father opposed her path as an artist, even on the surface they wouldn't give her any support. Yodogiri already knew this, but then why did he ask again?

It seemed he noticed her unspoken question. The man working as Hijiribe Ruri's employer split into a large smile.

"Ah, I know your father. Because of your mother and grandmother."

"Huh….. no….."

"Ah, did I make you angry? Your mother and grandmother have possibly seen you become an idol on TV. If it's like that, they might have something they want to tell you. Actually movie studios have had these kind of situations many times before, so that's why I asked you."

"I see…."

While replying this, Ruri still had her doubts.

She did tell Yodogiri her mother had left home.

But she didn't remember telling Yodogiri anything about her grandmother.

- Maybe Tenjin-sensei said something.

At that time she wasn't aware of the true meaning of Yodogiri's words so she drew this conclusion.

But, that conclusion was quickly dismissed.

Because thinking back, she hasn't seen her teacher in a long time, Ruri was still thinking this when Yodogiri's gently smile and asked.

“Ah, after this I also want us to meet someone else, is that okay?”

“Oh.”

“I want to sponsor more soap operas, and take part in the opening speeches of each enterprise category with Adabashi's boss. I'll have to ask Kujira for details.”

Ruri tilted her head in confusion from his words.

But, Yodogiri simply saluted and said:

“Sorry for disturbing you while you’re busy, please speak up if you have any complaints.” Ruri, grateful, hurriedly shook her head and complied.

She had no idea what this ‘social gathering’ was –

And also she didn’t know that on that day, the ‘blood of a monster' flowing in her body would awaken……

※※※※※

“Meow~”

Ruri, who was immersed in her disgusting past, heard a listless noise near her feet. Ruri recovered herself, and looked at the cat that had moved from Anri’s chest to her side.

“Meow?”

The cat tilted his head, like it was asking “Play with me?”, Ruri separated from her memory, and gently smiled.

It was Heiwajima Kasuka’s cat, called Dokusonmaru.

Contrary to his name, he really was a lovable creature.

Kasuka and the cat has cured her body of grief.

It’s strange that I’m cured by a cat when I’m a person that loves monsters, Ruri pondered this. Not in the past – it’s only a question I’m considering now.

- If it was just me, then it’ll be fine.
- If it’s only me ‘haunted’ by a fanatic, I can repel him….. even if I can’t, sacrificing me alone is fine.

Actually, so long as she has the strength of the killer ‘Hollywood’, it would be easy to defeat the fanatic.

But, that doesn’t relieve her.

She’s already not a human, she has an important thing to protect

- If I get Kasuka and Dokusonmaru involved -

The young girl with the inhuman strength.

Using the killer alias ‘Hollywood’, she’s a monster that’s killed many people.

Although she knows she’s that kind of ‘monster’, for now she ignores her sins and continues to pray.

Wishing that besides herself, no one else becomes the fanatics sacrificial victims.

If there must be a sacrifice, only sacrifice me.

The monster with her gentle feelings, does not believe in god, but continues to pray.

However –

The fanatic still holds his distorted love towards Ruri.

Along with his love, the fanatic knows.

Hijiribe Ruri is a gentle person.

He probably already knows what method to use in order to destroy her heart –

Several hours later

Adabashi continues to walk on the street at night.

Along the highway, slowly, slowly walking.

He's not thinking of where to go.

Because he's already arrived at his destination.

Shinra's high-class apartment.

On the roof of the opposite building, Adabashi slowly, slowly walks.

The sector is probably 100 meters back and forth.

"……"

Each step forward, the sound of teeth clacking together resounds.

Clack, clack, he spent his time like this.

All this time, he continued like this. On the roof's edge, where the apartment is in his line of sight – it's the entrance to Shinra's apartment. Like a puppet being pulled by strings, he continues to walk.

Though sometimes he takes out his phone to communicate with someone, he never stops walking. He indifferently repeats this pattern.

Finally dawn arrives with light appearing – a girl and a boy leave Shinra's apartment, later a man in a waiter's uniform comes out.

Covering his face with his hat, Adabashi immediately confirms Ruri's presence –

He stops walking and looks down the street, his face wearing a brutal smile.

But, Adabashi doesn't move, he carefully observes the surrounding.

Within the girl and boy's 20-meter scope, several men from some place appear. The 3 men walk around like bodyguards.

"….."

It might be Kasuka's and Ruri's bodyguards that the office hired.

The bodyguards are all muscled, all 3 protect her, under these conditions, attacking Ruri will be hard.

But, Adabashi is not anxious.

He knows.

Whether there are bodyguards or not, right now he can't attack Ruri.

He knows.

Even if he attacked Ruri while she's alone, he will lose.

He knows.

Hijiribe Ruri – is a monster.

Adabashi stands on the roof, confirming the situation using binoculars.

And determined the 3 people are unarmed –

'Sha' – the sound of air whistling between the gaps of teeth could be heard.

His unique laughter reverberates on the roof, he looks at his phone images.

How did he obtain it, or is it his own pictures –

The picture of Ruri and everyone else that just left the apartment.

The picture was low resolution, Yuuhei held a pet carriage, Heiwajima Shizuo had something on his head that looked like a cat.

Then, he continued to flip through the other pictures in his phone.

Like a part of an art magazine screening, some of the pictures had a somber smiling Ruri standing next to an expressionless Yuuhei.

On first impressions, most media offices will hide the idols' actions, but for Yuuhei and Ruri, whatever they do will receive a lot of attention, their boss arranged for the pair to be on the cover of the magazine in a positive image.

In one photo, Ruri is hugging a cute cat.

The article wrote: "Hijiribe Ruri doting on Yuigadokkuson, a cat raised by Hanejima Yuuhei."

"Dokuson, maru."

In front of the apartment the pet carrier and cat were still there, however, right now coming out from inside the apartment, their hands didn't hold anything.

Adabashi slowly walked towards the apartment to look, from the lower level he glared up.

Then determined only the top level opened –

Sha, sha, his unique laughter could be heard once more.

Adabashi was happy.

He knows.

Hijiribe Ruri is the killing monster 'Hollywood'.

He knows.

Hijiribe Ruri killed his father.

But, he doesn't harbor any hatred towards Hijiribe Ruri.

You could say in his heart he loved her.

If that's what is considered love.

He knows.

He won't be able to break Hijiribe Ruri's body or touch her –

But he could destroy her heart to love her.

And he also knows.

The best method to destroy her heart.

Looking like he was congratulating himself on a job well done.

Soon, not long after the laughing stopped, Adabashi went on the Dollars website to read –

For her, filled with evil intentions, the pure love has already crumbled.

The eastern skies started to light.

The raised chaoyang started to lighten up.

Adabashi with his firm resolve, quietly left the roof.

Loving Ruri, the cat she dotes on, and the cats caretakers –

He smiled absent-mindedly, just thinking about it.

※※※※※

Next Morning, Shinra's apartment

"…Then, why did you ask me to come?"

Shinra's apartment welcomed the daybreak from the constraining night.

Staring at a person with no face is a young girl that wears that face -- Haruna Mika.

"That, because I heard it was a stalker, I thought of you….."

Reading what Celty wrote on her PDA, the young girl spat out a rebuttal.

"That's going too far! I'm not a stalker!"

A young boy standing by her side sighs.

"You are a stalker."

"That's right, just like Seiji said. I am a stalker!"

Looking at the young girl who had immediately changed her mind with a smile on her face after hearing Seiji's words, Celty dully writes on her PDA.

"Ah, although the incident is already over, but how do you cope with a stalker….. for example, can this apartments' door be easily opened?"

"Huh? That's pathetic, Celty, the door lock in this apartment is really old."

"What?"

"I'll go out now, and try the door lock! Seiji, please wait here for a bit! I only need to think that Seiji's inside to motivate me!"

After her talk, Mika quickly walks outside.

"Your friend is very pro-active."

After locking the gate, Celty gives Anri, who's standing in the corridor watching this development, her PDA to read. Afterward, Anri smiles and nods.

"Yes, she's very scary."

"…..No, although she is very scary…."

Just when they were talking, the door started to clack, clack, clack around. The sounds heard from Mika on the other side of the door.

"There are lots of methods to break down the door to such an old lock! For instance with an iron wire, that can be done by any kid who was taught, so it's best if you trade in a new door. Ask the apartment landlord if it's possible to change to an electronic lock."

Along with another clack sound, the door opened.

- ?!

"Wah?!"

Celty and Shinra both exclaimed.

"Wait, just when we were talking…! How did you do that?!"

"This is a secret business. Celty couldn't even use her shadow to break the lock with such ease. And this is way more impressive than me."

"Even you say so."

Standing next to Celty. Shinra whispered.

"Hah… what now, Celty. Should we seriously consider replacing the door lock, or should we simply move out?"

"Indeed…. though I don't want the apartment manager downstairs to become suspicious about my situation, it'd be better not to move out…."

After showing these words to Shinra, Celty asked Mika.

"But, can other people also open the door that easily like you?"

"As long as you practice certain things you can, but even now on the net you can get detailed operational methods anywhere. In the end, the self-study defense is not good."

If someone were familiar with her natural disposition, they would have shouted “I don’t want to hear this from you!”. But Anri only smiled and Seiji simply lowered his head and sighed.

“Really….”

Celty’s heart recalled Aoba, who appeared 2 months ago. Because he appeared at the apartment gate before, she coul’t help but worry that he’ll come in when nobody’s home.

Reading Celty’s worry, Shinra patted her hand and said.

“Then I’ll ask the landlord to replace the door lock. Though it won’t help if Shizuo decides to smash the door down.”

“Don’t say such terrifying things!”

“But in reality Shizuo can destroy railings and cups with no problems. OK, right now the most important thing is to tell Ruri how we’ll cope with the stalker, we’ll discuss it while we eat. I’ve called takeout..… Ah, where did I put it?”

“The newest one should be clipped to the newspaper.”

Celty and Shinra continued to talk while walking toward the café.

But Mika gently tapped Anri’s shoulder while following the other two.

“Hey hey, Anri.”

“?”

“How’s Mikado-kun been recently?”

“Eh…”

Why is she asking about Mikado’s situation, when he’s not here?

Anri didn’t understand what her friend meant and dully shook her head.

“What’s wrong with Ryuugamine-kun”

“Oh, I thought recently you guys have progressed well, have you already kissed?”

“K, kiss… Ryuugamine-kun and I don’t have that kind of relationship.….”

Seeing Anri’s red cheeks, Mika laughed and said.

“Idiot, I’m just joking. Though Mikado-kun definitely likes Anri, and you also care about Mikado-kun right?”

A straight-forward question.

Anri doesn’t know how to respond, just hangs her head.

“…..”

“Oh gosh, forget it. Regardless of what happens, as long as you tell me when you figure it out! Wait till me and Seiji have nothing to do and we’ll chat.”

“You can really talk, don’t just say things like ‘whenever is okay’.”

On the other side Seiji was whispering, but in the end Anri didn’t say anything about Mikado’s situation.

“…..Thank you.”

She said in a low voice and smiled gently.

※※※※※

East Japan, Daytime. Reception room in Jack’o Lantern Japan office

“OK, OK! We managed to finish earlier than the deadline, Good Job! The ones we should praise are our two golden top idols. Even though they’re stars, they’re always so humble, they really make good role models for other people!”

Sleek white walls gently reflecting rays from fluorenscent lighting, the kind of building that gives people the impression of elegance and coordination. But within the building, this kind of loud noise can be heard resounding from one of the rooms.

Fair skinned, golden hair slicked backwards, dark sunglasses along with a careless beard, white western style clothing and leather boots, wearing a large ring on his hand and a cigarette hanging from his mouth; the man looked exactly like he was playing the role of a villain from the movies.

This unique man – is Jack’o Lantern Japan’s boss Max Sandshield, he continues talking while making wide gestures:

“I heard the two of them were waiting here 20 minutes ago. Ah ah, this is really great. Their humbleness might even compare to their boss! Isn’t this just like the story of Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, where Hideyoshi used his body to warm Nobunaga’s straw sandals?! Wait….. talking about MR. Yuuhei’s and MISS Ruri’s sandals on their bodies…….? If this was on the online auction, wouldn’t it sell for a great price?!”

“I’m afraid that these commodity businesses have a high probability of failing, so please give up. Of course, if the boss wants to resign then it’ll be a different story. In addition, it looks like the boss was 20 minutes late, they however arrived on time. Please be more diligent.”

“……”

The secretary callously reported, making Max smile grimly. Then he walked toward the couch where Yuuhei and Ruri were seated, and patted their shoulders.

“Forget it, don’t worry about these minor details. The universe with its 13.6 billion years of history, a trivial 20 minutes doesn’t even exist. Time is money? Time flies? YES! It’s true! However life is not all about money, am I right? The important things are heart and soul! You shouldn’t become a slave to money! This is exactly why you became idols, am I right? So don’t pester me about 20 minutes!”

After that, like he just thought of something he turned back to the secretary.

“Hey! I just said some very significant words! Write it down for me!”

“Wasn’t that just your excuse for being late?”

Though the female secretary gave him a cold glance she nevertheless wrote down what he said.

Looking at the actions of this unique host, Yuuhei held the same expressionless face, while Ruri didn’t know what response to make and simply appeared confused.

- Even now, I still can’t follow the boss’s actions…..

Though she's thinking this, it didn’t matter that much to her. Moreover leaving behind the nightmare she experienced in her previous office, this kind of violent person is incomparably better.

In front of her, Max made a strange noise and exchanged a glance with the secretary.

Immediately, the secretary placed an envelope on the reception room's table, and bowed a goodbye to leave the room.

"?"

In response to Ruri's questioning look, Max picked up the envelope and said with a serious expression:

"Ah, Mr. Yuuhei, please face the room's corner, I still don't know if you should look, but at least we can let you listen, OK?"

"Ok."

Though it was a bewildering instruction, the idol without any show of anger turned toward the wall and stood motionless.

"????"

Looking at the thoroughly confused Ruri, Max took out a picture from within the envelope, and directly gave it to her.

"It's yesterday's mail. The same kind of threatening letters as before, it must be your stalker's doing."

"……..!"

"Actually I also didn't know if giving you this kind of thing would be a good idea when we should be protecting you….. Unfortunately it's a pity that it came to me who loves disposing of these kinds of dirty factions. So to arrest the stalker as soon as possible, and thoroughly bury these people, we hope to attain your assistance."

Looking at Max who was carelessly flinging around the word 'stalker', Ruri anxiously took the picture and slowly flipped it over.

"……? ……..!"

"Why….. why……"

Ruri stared at the picture as her entire body shook.

A few seconds of silence passed.

But Ruri felt the time was multiple folds longer. In front of her, Max shrugged his shoulders and said in a low voice.

"If you keep silent like this, on the other side, MR. Yuuhei will think this is Japanese OBAKE and feel scared….. In regards to the people in the photo, do you have any clues?"

"That……. from before….."

"Huh?"

"This photo…. Can I show it to Yuuhei?"

Yuuhei, who unexpectedly heard his name called, turned his head.

Ruri kept her head low, and passed him the photo.

"……."

Yuuhei expressionly looked at the photo.

The picture contained a very rough image, where in the centre lay a young girl who could be immediately distinguished as Ruri at first glance. Though her eyes were blocked, the white skin and body dimensions made it obvious.

The place seemed to be some room in a large building.

Though the picture also captured a window, the louver was closed, so the outside scenery couldn't be seen.

What is strange in the picture is that there is no furniture.

The floor had something like a blue waste cloth instead of a rug.

And her surrounding only consisted of the outline of several men, it seemed they all carried something to cover their faces.

But the strangest thing was –

Ruri's hand was dripping blood, one tall man was using a wineglass to capture the dripping red liquid. It was this kind of unusual picture.

In the seconds that Yuuhei held the picture – horrible memories from within her heart suddenly resurfaced.

The colour of her blood.

The laughing men. And – the appearance of her father.

The scenes flashed through Ruri's mind like a galloping horse, all kinds of sounds resounded within her.

- Is this the same as back then?
- I've seen her before in the magazines.
- I keep feeling a bit excited for some reason.
- This is not a game, Adabashi.
- Yeah….. but can it really be done?
- Really, when the light falls on her face, I can't help but feel she's other-worldly.
- However looking at the reports from her health check-ups, she really is special.
- In fact it's not known whether or not she's even related to the average human, that's why I'm so excited.
- Adabashi, please control yourself.
- Do you want to try?
- Is that good? Kujira.
- No problems.

Along with these 'sounds', she could 'feel' an ice-cold thin prick pierce her hand.

After the coldness, a burning pain impacted her brain, and she convulsed from head to toe.

Why is it me.

Why does it have to be like this.

After everything why is it like this.

Countless ‘why’s’ revereberated through her mind, however the young girl’s body was explicitly telling her that this was no dream, but reality.

- Incredible, the wound healed immediately.
- It’s nighttime now, of course it’s more astonishing.
- I won’t grow old?
- Till now, we still don’t know how many years he spent.
- But indeed this is worth the value.
- Where did President Yodogiri find this child?
- Information related to Hijiribe’s blood was also only discovered recently.
- Home burnt down, and no trace of the culprit…..
- Her pictures can sometimes be seen on TV magazines.
- Because it’s almost exactly the same, just to be on the safe side….
- We investigated for a bit, we never thought it would turn out like this?
- You have good luck, Yodogiri-san.
- Can this job not be done without luck?
- However, the cells transform in this extraordinary way due to the blood, this point as least you should understand clearly?
- You mean…. We have the opportunity to be like her?
- How do I drink the blood?
- Like this, you guys will become accomplices.

These recollections rushed through her mind, the different sounds echoed.

Similar to the sensation of multiple photographs being taken of her, the flashes of memory of her blood being drunk emerged in her mind.

Just as the trembling scenes of her past surfaced suddenly in her heart, it gradually started to fade.

But in that moment, the gentle yet hateful voice of Yodogiri Jinnai could be heard.

- Ah yah, Ruri, Adabashi-san and the others will give you the transaction today.
- You might not want to let people know your real body is that of a monster….
- But more that that, you definitely wouldn’t want others to know what Adabashi and them did to you, right?
- I hope you don’t misunderstand, I never intended anything bad to befall you.
- Or I should say, this is for your own good.
- As long as you give a little payment, you can be saved.
- Even though right now you’re unable to understand, but one day you’ll see the truth.

That ‘one day’ where everything would be understood never existed.

Yodogiri's words were always lies.

However, that was enough for her to dispel the suspicion in her heart.

Wearing her usual expression, she walked toward the concert sites.

Only when she's acting or singing, she finds herself again.

Her faulty self, herself who is different from other humans, hiding behind Yodogiri's shining corporation, and in front of the ignorant audience, only in these moments can she let out her real voice.

Only depending on these moments to support her, can she keep her true self.

At the concerts, her tear-filled FANS support her feet.

The roles she plays on screen support her feelings.

She always refused to overcome that limit.

Always denied her gradually collapsing heart.

But, now it was quickly reaching its limit.

- Your father has come.
- You see, after your mother went missing and because of the fire, you had no place to find shelter.
- He said he wanted me to give his daughter back.
- It seems he already knows about our situation.
- Therefore, hmm, to make a long story short, your father requested that I take you out today……
- Only we know your fathers residence. You should understand the meaning of this.
- If you want what's best for your father, please continue to work as a commendable 'commodity', this would be the greatest help for your father.

It was simple.

But then, incidentally, she learned of her father's death.

Online, she attempted to search for information on her father's residence –

A man with the name Tsukumoya Shinichi provided free information for her.

In the end – after going through various complications, she determined what had happened.

Her father had been killed by Yodogiri a long time ago.

Having already had her blood drunk by his 'accomplices', then concealing it.

Traces of murder, her father's movements. All evidence disappeared.

She felt she was crying out in anguish.

What was most shocking was that she could calmly hear the sound of her own anguished crying.

Hijiribe Ruri knew now.

Maybe it was in this instant – the monster in her heart emerged.

It wasn't the blood awakening.

Her body didn’t change.

However, in her heart, a real monster appeared.

After that, newspapers started reporting of a serial killer who commits slaughters without leaving any traces, a monster called ‘Hollywood’ –

A terrorist murderer made for revenge.

Ruri finally came back to the present reality.

The photograph had caused her past memories to fill thick in her mind.

The day when everything started collapsing.

The day when she found out through others that the blood of a monster ran through her veins.

The day when people drank the blood flowing from her own hand.

Regardless of what or how or whether or not those scenes could be considered normal.

She can only understand the events as trying to summon the devil.

Of course the devil wasn’t really summoned, it was only an insignificant drinking of blood.

The blood from her own body, into the mouths of strange men, this reality made her want to vomit.

And now a picture of that very ‘scene’ that made her want to vomit is right here in front of her.

After all these thoughts had finished she decided to show the photo to Yuuhei.

Regardless of whether he accepts it or denies it, it doesn't matter.

This man had saved her life and her mind, she treats him almost like an adjudicater.

Whether he condemns her for her contamination or gives pity comfort, Hijiribe Ruri is prepared to accept it. Holding these feelings in her heart she gives the picture ot Yuuhei.

“……”

Seeing Yuuhei staring silently at the picture, Ruri opened her mouth and said:

“Before….. I wanted to talk to you about my past… Yuuhei said he didn’t want to hear it.”

“Yeah.”

“But now, ……I think it really would have been better if I had told you before….”

Yuuhei, facing a determined Ruri, gave an unexpected answer.

“You truly think it would have been better to have told me before?”

“Huh…….?”

“When you suddenly get a shock, it’s always better to calm yourself first. Especially when the situation is unstable, because it’s not easy to make a decision when you're flustered.”

“…….”

“I’m not saying anything special, the only one capable of getting over your past is you.”

Just like the lines of a lead character in a movie. In fact, she has used these quotes herself several times in roles she’s played.

However Yuuhei's words hit Ruri hard, as if she was being poured with cold water.

Ruri fell into silence. Yuuhei placed the picture back onto the table.

Looking at the two people, Max, completely indifferent to the tense atmosphere spoke:

"Your companionship really is harmonious. The photo album without Miss Ruri has sold out, next time you should both shoot a photo album together, okay?"

Then, still using an expression contrary to the atmosphere he changed the topic.

"Really, if you'd have just told us from the start we could have discussed a countermeasure to deal with this situation. So artists really are filled with various secrets.... that's right, no single person can hide the truth. One person's secret is the entire office's secret…. Everybody is on the same ship! Anything that's yours is mine! Though when I first arrived in Japan, I didn't understand this myself, but regarding your look-a-like vampire stalker, I simply want to use a cross and wooden stake to rip them into pieces….."

"……"

His words were meant to be in jest, but after hearing his last sentence, Ruri's body couldn't help but shiver.

Beside her, Yuuhei put a hand on her shoulder and softly told her not to worry.

Though it was his same expressionless face, his calm gaze somehow soothed Ruri.

On the other side, Max looks at Ruri, and nodded his head while returning the photo back into the envelope.

"Speaking of which, so saying this photo is real, this would long have had a countermeasure. If you have any clues about the source please tell me beforehand. Though Yodogiri Jinnai…. I've heard a lot of unpleasant rumours, a thorny kind of guy…."

"....."

"I would have never thought Ruri would be the kind of girl to shoot a special interest videotape for money."

"…….Eh?"

"Though looking at your expression you're genuinely disgusted…. I am a person that respects AV women, but men that compel young girls like you into doing these shoots when you don't like it are the most disgusting! ....Maybe it should even be considered a crime? Even in Japan."

On hearing Max's unexpected words, Ruri couldn't help but cry out.

But the boss just gently patted her shoulder, and said to her in his office tone.

"You must be worried….. it's okay now. Let Hanejima Yuuhei soothe your mind! Also don't forget that I, your employer, can also help you, so whenever you're in pain just think of my face, then HAPPY NEW YEAR! It's the new year! You should create a new self and bury your past in the grave! Oh, that's right, the two of you in the photo album will act as a steward and female servant."

He started arranging his things and continued:

"It really is a GOOD IDEA! It would be better if Yuuhei acts as the leading role 'Silence of the Steward' the second shoot about to go public, a golden opppurtunity! Great! The secretary has to write this down! You guys wait here a bit SORRY! YES! SORRY!"

After saying that, he quickly ran out the doors.

Ruri, open-mouthed, stared at the boss's bold and unrestrained form --- then, beside her Yuuhei began talking:

"……Perhaps the boss already noticed."

“Eh?”

“He must have already noticed the photo wasn’t something like an adult videotape.”

Yuuhei looked in the direction where the boss departed, he whispered in a way that he knew Ruri was listening:

“Though boss is the type of person faithful to his own desires regardless of the law, I think he’s still a gentle person, so Ruri, you can trust him.”

“Him and I are the same, we’re clumsy when it comes to affection.”

※※※※

Afternoon, a road somewhere in Ikebukuro

“Meow!”

A cute call sounded from the pet carrier that Anri was holding.

Through the carrier door slits, sunlight shone on Dokusonmaru’s form, who was facing upwards revealing his stomach.

Looking at the kittens’ exposed expression, Mika couldn’t help bending down and saying.

“So cute, meow meow~”

Mika extended a finger into the pet carrier and swayed her finger around, the kitten used one small paw to follow the finger and also started swaying left to right.

“I’ve always thought that people would unconsciously revert back to a child when they meet cute kittens. “

“No, it’s the kitten that is being treated like a small child.”

“Seiji and I are going to have kids that are even cuter than this kitten.”

Staring at Mika absorbed in playing tricks on the kitten, Anri didn’t know what to think in reply to that statement, she lowered her head with a red face.

- “Although, me and Shinra’s jobs don’t have specific times, I don’t know if we can look after the cat….”

Just like Shizuo, Celty was also worrying about this and wrote these words on her PDA, Anri replied without hesitation: “Then I’ll take care of him.” – and here they are.

Because she’s received innumerable kindnesses from Celty before, Anri wanted to repay her back through whatever means possible.

Shinra nodded his head and said: “If it’s Anri then it’ll be fine.” Shizuo and the others also believed in Celty’s trusted person, and gave Dokunsonmaru to Anri without hesitation.

Because that matter was easily settled, Anri instead started to consider if there was anything specific to do or not to do for the kitten. Until the pet owner Yuuhei said:

- “Dokosonmaru won’t get close to bad people, so there’s no problem.”

Just like that, Anri received the kitten.

“Ah ah~~ but you met Hanejima Yuuhei and Hijiribe Ruri, I’m so jealous of Anri~~”

Mika said this seriously. However Anri gently shook her head.

“Because they were really famous, I froze and couldn’t say anything.…”

In reality, it wasn’t for this reason, it was because ‘Saika’ made her sense an inexplicably strange feeling towards Ruri. Of course she didn’t say this, she just used her usual lonely looking smile and with a low voice said:

“But thank you for complying with us today without asking questions.”

“It’s nothing, after all you said it’ll be good if I came with Seiji, so definitely no problem.”

After chatting like this, Anri and Mika bid goodbye and prepared to go home.

Mika suddenly asked: “Do you want to eat? I know a place where you can keep your pet there temporarily, want to go see?”

But not wanting to disturb Mika and Seiji’s time further, Anri refused her invitation, carrying the cart she walked towards Ikebukuro.

At this time, she still hasn’t noticed.

She hasn’t notice a gaze on her back, and the form of a person following her.

Celty and the others were all thinking too naively.

They all thought the stalker wouldn’t do anything to Anri, who has no association with Ruri.

They used common sense to guess the actions of the stalker who has no sense at all.

And the price for this negligence was this strange shadow that appeared to be following Anri.

However, it was a little different from the slasher incident.

The shadow following did not approach her, only tagged along behind her for a distance.

After Anri returned to her apartment, the form also quietly vanished.

They were satisfied just finding out her residence and left without taking any further action.

Except for the action of opening his phone and taking a picture.

※※※※※

At the same time, Ikebukuro, Russian Sushi Restaurant

“Yes~ Today new sushi creations~ Small Sushi, Big Sushi, all fresh and slippery. There is also the whirlpool sushi and yida sushi that will make you cry out in joy as well as the dragon sushi waiting for your taste buds.”

At this moment as Simon was using his unique expression to introduce new commodities, Seiji and Mika sat near the register and selected a set meal and some select items, apparently preparing for an early supper.

Taking advantage of the moment, Simon strongly recommended the new set meal of large sushi, middle sized sushi and mini sushi. Apart from these three there is also a side dish of a huge sushi with a very interesting centre of seafood filling. Just like the Russian doll, matryoshka, it appears similar to a person inside a person inside a person.

While eating the unique sushi, Seiji asks Mika sitting next to him.

“What is it? You look like you've lost all your energy.”

“Eh?.... Really! How can I not have any energy when I’m next to Seiji!”

Mika hurriedly laughed. But Seiji calmly said.

“….Is it because of Sonohara?”

“…….Yes.”

Unable to refute, Mika honestly acknowledged the question. After a short silence, she stared at her tea placed on the table and asked Seiji with a quiet voice.

“Really, regardless of what Celty said, she still can’t fully open up to me.”

Listening to her, it was as if she chatted with Celty before. Though it would be more understandable with further detail, Seiji didn’t delve into it further, just averted his eyes from Mika’s lowered heard.

“It was because she was wary of us….. Thinking about it, that’s probably my fault. Sorry.”

“Seiji doesn’t need to apologize! .....I’m the one that hasn’t talked to her recently, I feel apologetic……”

In fact, ever since she enterd Raira academy, she almost never noticed Anri.

That was because even without her, Anri had her new friends Mikado and Kida – it could be said Anri didn’t need to ‘follow’ her anymore.

Though it was very slow, Anri gradually became more carefree – therefore Mika also freely focused on her love for Seiji.

For her, she loves Seiji more than anyone else.

But her heart doesn’t only hold Seiji, it’s only that he’s in the highest position.

She holds Seiji, who only holds Celty’s ‘head’ in his heart, with an unsurpassable love, but Anri is truly a close friend.

It was at this time, Anri’s situation changed.

Yellow turbans and Dollars, the slasher incident started, the 2 gangs had a dispute. Kida Masaomi vanished from Anri’s sight.

But Mika also noticed, there is a shadow hidden in Anri.

Though Mika also asked Mikado –

A few months ago, Anri’s situation became drastically worse.

According to the facts she gathered from her own ‘intelligence network’, though she didn’t obtain the authenication from Anri, Mika couldn’t help but fall into self-depression, and depended on Seiji’s love to continue living.

Her heart also started to feel lonely.

But this loneliness can’t be concealed by loving Seiji or by Seiji’s love.

To conceal her restlessness for her friend by using Seiji, she wasn’t this low.

“That Anri, she always objectively regards everything through a third persons perspective, including herself… because she’s like this, she treats her own business like other peoples business and is unconcerned…… she simply doesn’t give a thought to her own danger.”

※※※※※

Evening, Ikebukuro Sunshine 60 main road

"……"

Kida Masaomi is in a desperate situation.

Standing at the sunshine theatre intersection and looking around the surrounding pathways.

He left Ikebukuro half a year ago.

Though he once came back when Dollars was having a dispute with Toramaru he immediately left again, right now he leisurely strolled around the block he hadn't seen for a long time.

- Nothing has really changed.
- Nothing changed……really?

Though a lot of the various shops have changed their decorations, but from memory 60 main road hasn't fundamentally changed.

If you had to say anything was different, it would be Yellow turban members that could be seen everywhere before have disappeared, the atmosphere was peaceful without any violent organisations about.

Students or OL, office workers that just got off work, foreigners, all kinds of people walked around in front of Kida's eyes.

Also it was be the first day of summer vacation for students, the number of youngsters wearing casual clothing also seemed a lot more than usual.

In front of the movie theatre were a lot of young females, looking at the electronic monitor of Hanejima Yuuhei's latest movie advert, it seems it's receiving a high praise.

- ……but, I still don't feel easy.
- It's these ordinary groups that can be seen as Dollars.

Though returning to this street after a long time felt good, but from where should he start collecting information.

- In the end, it's still best to meet up with Kadota.
- …….Though I say that, after the disagreement last time with Kadota, I can't just ask for help like nothing has happened. Moreover I'm afraid that even meeting would be difficult…..
- ….but there's no helping it.
- I can't identify one person by one person… and I can't face Mikado and Anri.

Kida slapped his cheeks, and concentrated on looking at the streets scenery.

Kodota's big frame with Yamasaki and the others should be very conspicuous with their strange appearance, so I'll just look around for this.

At this time, Yamasaki and them would probably be buying Manga, I'll patrol around Toranoana or Animate and the other big book stores.

While considering all this Kida observed the streets –

After several minutes, a familiar face suddenly appeared.

No, instead of saying a familiar face, it was rather a familiar appearance.

Or it should be said, though Kida knew him, the man did not know anything about Kida.

- Though I said I wouldn't be able to identify through one person by one person…..
- I might die by the first strike. If I really die, then I'm really sorry, Saki.

Kida wiped sweat off his forehead, followed the red haired man closely, and whispered the name of the man that wore the uniform of a bartender.

"Heiwajima…… Shizuo……"

"Though, yesterday the cat your younger brother brought was really cute."

"Affirmative, a cat that can climb on Shizuo-san's head must display attractive qualities."

Tom murmered like he just remembered something. Vorona used her unnatural Japanese to reply.

"But if I had to say, I'm a dog person."

While chatting with his colleagues, Shizuo also wondered whether Kasuka and Ruri would be attacked by the stalker, he felt restless.

- Dammit, if I just knew who the criminal was, then even if it's the roof of Sunshine I can rush up there…..

Tom, who didn't know about the consideration of these dangerous stunts rubbed his stomach and said:

"Overall, we finished quite early today. Collection also went smoothly, after we take care of the money how about Russian sushi?"

After listening to the boss's happy proposal, Vorona shook her heak and said:

"Can only deny the proposal, with familiar people at a familiar shop cannot ingest any nutrients, too anxious and ashamed, avoids vigourously."

"Don't say that, aren't they Russian peers? ……Okay, if it's really no good, then how about MOPOKA, beside the Ikebukuro pasture where we can eat baked breads….. Shizuo, do you have any preferences?"

"I'm fine with anything."

"Then what should we do, or we could go to Okinawa restaurant on the Meiji main road?"

Tom continued talking while slowly roaming on the evening street.

Then, a form suddenly appeared in front of them.

It was a hair-dyed golden somewhat slender youth.

"Ah, is there a problem? What did you find us for?"

Looking at the others frivolous appearance, Tom assumed it was a troublesome guy looking for Shizuo, he opened his mouth, but –

The young boy with a pained expression deeply bowed his head, and said:

"……I'm very sorry for disturbing your work ….But I have some business, I have to apologize to Heiwajima Shizuo……."

"Ah ah?"

Standing behind Tom, Shizuo looking unconcerned tilted his head and said with a low voice:

“Who is this guy?”

“…..My name…….. is called Kida Masaomi.”

“Kida Masaomi?”

After hearing the youth’s name, Shizuo unconsciously frowned.

- Huh? Where have I heard of that name before.
- Actually when did I hear it?
- I think it was about half a year ago…..

In Shizuo’s mind, a fuzzy memory slowly surfaced.

In ice-cold rain – a memory where he was hit by something.

“…..Huh?”

A sharp forceful impact in the chest, belly and foot.

- “If you want to hate someone, then hate the person who gave us the order and the gun…..”

A timid cry, a man’s scared voice.

- “If you want to hate someone, hate Kida Masaomi!”

Falling face-down on the asphalt road.

The moment these feelings and scenes surfaced in Shizuo’s mind –

“Ah ah.”

The first one to speak was not Shizuo, but Tom.

“You’re the Yellow turbans…..”

On hearing this, Shizuo holding in his intent to kill, clenched his fists and lowered his head.

Kida imagined in the next intant his neck wrenched apart –

But still insisted on opening his mouth, and like he was on the side looking at himself speaking, he said.

“I am in the organization that shot Shizuo…. the leader of Yellow turbans, Kida Masaomi.”

※※※※※

Mikado’s Apartment

“Weird…”

Ryuugamine Mikado, sitting in front of his computer in his room, whispered a sigh.

He had just opened Dollars display board web page.

Hijiribe Ruri’s stalker exists in Dollars.

In order to confirm this rumour, Mikado, from the Dollars exchange site, opened a control remission power's web page related to Hijiribe Ruri, and starts reading the various information –

But he seems to have realized something strange, tilting his head he looks into the common people.

Generally, there are 3 precious years of high school life, and the absolutely most precious times within these years are the summer vacations.

However, on the very first day of the summer vacation he's alone in front of the computer, he can only smile bitterly, he doesn't have the slightest amount of regret.

While eating rice cakes sent from a married couple, Mikado fondly reminisces of his hometown.

Though last year, he went back to his old home early, this year he's afraid he has to wait till the lantern's festival.

- At least before that time.… I want this matter to come to an end.
- Though I don't know what I can actually achieve in any situation…
- But at least…. I want to do everything possible…

Resolving his determination, he recalled the forms of several childhood friends from his homeland.

Admidst the memories of friends and relatives, there is Sonohara-san and him changing, and the fragment of time when 3 people went to Raira Academy.

Though they would occasionally go out with other people to the bowling alley or Karaoke, but after lunch and school, both Sonohara-san and Masaomi lead normal student lives.

He was worried that Sonohara-san didn't get along with the other girls, but because the times he had with Sonohara-san and Masaomi were so happy, he always forgot to ask Sonohara-san if she had this problem.

But now — the small group of 3 people doesn't have Masaomi's presence anymore.

Before Masaomi came back, Mikado's time had been still.

Wait till he comes back, then the 3 people will tell each other their own secrets, then it'll be like before.

At least that was what Mikado believed.

But then, that Mikado changed, starting from the vacation in May.

He received a deep impact from the violent events he experienced.

His own wish to prevent daily violence confused his world.

After the conversation he had with Masaomi, he's started to consciously avoid meeting him.

The fact that he can connect throught the network has not added to his courage.

The first time he talked with the username "Bakyura", Mikado couldn't forget.

He's also studying how to be better in a situation like the golden week incident.

But, Mikado believes that nothing has changed.

Kida and Sonohara-san, as long as the 3 people are together, then we can definitely move forward in the same direction again.

This idea will absolutely not change.

What changed in his heart is –

Including him, 3 people's destinations. Once they return to that place, only he can protect it or he'll create that place.

This is what he believes.

Only this –

Ryuugamine Mikado's gear starts to turn in an entirely different direction than before.

After passing through a short network, Mikado quietly sighed.

- ….So that's how it is.

As if he realized something, he continued his task, and started to download each file online.

Then, after an instant –

"….? This…..? ….!?"

Watching the computer screen appear with several pictures, Mikado's expression stiffens.

Immediately, after reading supplementary article files, his face becomes paler.

"No way….."

After shivering for several seconds—

The boy quickly takes out his phone, and starts calling someone.

"…..Ah! Hey Hey! It's me…"

"What is it, Mikado-sempai, you voice is a bit weird."

The other side of the phone is Aoba. Mikado continues talking with growing anxiousness:

"Sorry, it's bad…… I want to organize a meeting immediately."

※※※※※

Somewhere in Tokyo, a man in whispering

"Dollars hasn't really changed."

The female on his side apparently said something, but the man ignored her. While he cleverly played with two knives in one hand, he continued saying:

"I heard that Mikado-kun has changed…. but how has he actually grown, I'll watch with anticipation."

The man smiles, his phone suddenly rang out with electro-acoustics.

"Yeah, what's up?"

Though the man greets the phone with a happy sound, but –

Suddenly, the happy expression is removed, and he's only left with the corners of this mouth pulled in a reluctant smile.

"Ah, Shizu-chan and Kida huh…?"

"You're still managing a feeble existence, Shizu-chan!"

※※※※※

“Aren’t you the guy that chased all the girls on the streets last year!”

“…….”

“You are… you’re that guy people said was a scoundrel.”

The sound of his neck cracking was heard, Shizuo stepped forward.

“Ah, Shizuo……”

Tom seemed to want to say something, but after seeing Shizuo’s expression, shrugged his shoulders and kept quiet.

“I’m not here to ask for forgiveness, and I don’t want to argue.”

After saying these words, Kida calmly clenched his teeth.

- Ah, I’ll definitely die this way.

Although he felt his own fingertips shivering, Kida still made an effort to catch the fist.

- I thought it wouldn’t be a problem, but in the end it’s scary.

Whether he’s beaten till he hears his bones crack, or perhaps ripped to pieces, he had come to understand. In his mind, pictures of his life flashed through like a galloping horse.

- Sorry Saki, sorry, Anri-chan, Mikado.

But then –

In front of Kida, Shizuo simply stretched out his index finger and tapped his forehead, whispering with a stricken expression.

“I’m bigger than you, use polite speech towards me.”

“……Huh?”

Kida immediately turned his head, and looks at the other surprised.

“I heard it from Celty, you gave those garbage people suitable punishment.”

“Celty?”

Kida, who doesn’t know the headless knight’s real name, shook his head, but quickly got his composure back and calmly said to Shizuo.

“But I was responsible for your injury! I want to earnestly face your anger….”

In response to this, Shizuo suddenly stretched out his hand.

His thumb and index finger were touching, and he made the movement to lightly flick Kida’s head –

“I just said to use polite speech towards me.”

Then, he gently flicked his finger at Kida’s forehead.

“Owww.”

Along with a graon, Kida actually fell down to the ground.

It was only the flicking of the forefinger, this response seemed a bit excessive, but considering the one who did it was Shizuo, perhaps it feels no different than a normal hoodlum attacking with a metal bat.

Looking at Kida dazed on the ground, Shizuo held his two hands together and said:

“After all you also taught a lesson to that bastard, I don’t harbour any hatred toward the Yellow turbans….. so I don’t really have any animosity against you. The flick today can be considered your punishment.”

In front of Shizuo, who was saying these words, Tom squatted down and said with a low voice.

“……Though you’re not angry, I don’t even have to say this….”

Kida looked like he had a slight concussion with dizzy eyes, Tom reluctantly sighed.

“But your strike wasn’t very light.”

“Serious……. It had that much power….? Though it’s my strength, but it was only a flick….?

Shizuo lowered his head and flicked his own forehead several times. The pa pa sounds that resounded were similar to the sounds of a fist knocking sturdy wood.

But Shizuo only tilted his head in confusion.

“I have a question. Does the flicker have anything to do with martial arts? It’s never mentioned in any books I’ve seen, looking at the fingers, it’s just the snapping of fingers.”

“You don’t even know this……”

While they were talking like this, the red-haired man worriedly asked the recovering Kida:

“Alright?”

“Oh…… Sorry.”

“You should also stop worrying. That guy also has limits.… Speaking normally, you really should be beaten up for punishment… but you see, if you did get beaten up by that guy, wouldn’t you be dead?”

“…….Yeah.”

Kida answered with a grim smile, his heart inexplicably relaxed.

- Overall, is this alright?
- But Shizuo got shot… right…..?
- Is this outcome alright….. I…..

His mind weaved through various thoughts in confusion.

Seemingly sensing his mood, the red-haried man held out his hand to help Kida up and said:

“Don’t worry. It’s better if there’s no fighting, after all this, young man, you must be hungry?”

“Huh?”

“No matter what the situation is, the most important thing is always to satisfy the stomach. It’ll be on me, you should come.”

- That….. this guy….
- Is always with Shizuo….

Kida was dumbfounded and simply stared at the other man’s face, but the man rubbed his tummy and continued saying:

“I’m Shizuo’s boss, Tanaka. You can also call me Tom. Though you look like a gloomy kind of troublesome guy, but sometimes it’s better to get things off you chest, right? I also can’t sleep well if my family members are having problems. So let's eat good food, and cast the worries away.”

“But, I came to apologise…..”

“Of course, it’s not just a pure invite.”

“Huh?”

Watching Kida sluggishly stand up, Tom smirked and said:

“Aren’t you the leader of Yellow turbans? Excuse me, but I’m interested in knowing everything that’s happened….. please be open with details, is that alright?”

※※※※※

Anri’s apartment

“Good kitty.”

Anri kept repeating this, while scratching Dokusonmaru under his throat.

Dokusonmaru takes the opportunity to roll over, four fingers start to scratch the exposed abdomen, Anri strokes its belly gently. It immediately cries out “meow~” happily when Anri plays.

After the cat went to the restroom and got ready for bed, there was nothing important for Anri to do, so she played with the cat for a while.

She thought about the cat she raised when she was young, Dokusonmaru reminder her fondly of the memory of her past pet.

When she was young, the tri-coloured cat was just like a friend.

It also reminded her of her family's memory – the antique shop called 'Sonohara Hall'.

Though there were no joyful memories, the fragments involving interactions with her mother and the tri-couloured cat still give her a relieved existence.

Even though, that cat – was kicked to death by Anri's father.

- Even if it's the famous Hijiribe Ruri that's also having a hard time….

As for the 'unusual feeling' her body felt, Anri noticed.

And Celty from long before was an inhuman existence.

This was not a comparitive realization, also she doesn't know if Hijiribe Ruri herself knew of her own abnormality.

Compared to this topic, for Anri, she doesn't think much about the fact that Ruri is being stalked.

- Stalker.
- Is it like Mika?
- Someone like Niekawa…..

Anri thought about when she was attacked by Niekawa Haruna half a year ago, and felt a little sad.

- Why did she want to do that….
- I still don't understand….

Thinking about this – she suddenly recalled the strange feeling she got from Ruri, and pondered.

My worry for Mikado – is it really normal?

After all, what intuition and worries does an abnormal person like her hold, maybe there's no significance at all.

Though she knew long ago she was different from other people.

But are these kind of feelings normal – she never thought about it before.

Like when she was with Haruna Mika, when she spent time with Mikado and Kida, she treated them as normal.

But now the way Mikado's acting is a bit weird.

Just like that time – Kida Masaomi changed and started acting weird, then we found out about the dispute with Yellow turbans.

But, there's also some difference from that time.

That time, when Kida started changing, Mikado was still by her side.

However now there is no one.

Thinking that Mikado is weird, is it a correct assumption?

Of course not, to anyone else, isn't the way Mikado acting very normal?

Though she asked this question, no one was there to answer.

"….."

Anri reminisced about the times she spent together with these three people, and unconsciously stopped stroking the cat.

Looking at the cat indignantly calling out and rolling onto his belly, Anri broke into a serene smile.

Saika didn't seem to have any interst in the cat, the 'love words' recited in her heart is no different than normal.

Listening to the words of love Saika had towards humanity, Anri lost herself in thought.

If me and Saika completely assimilated, what would happen to Mikado and Kida? Can everything be accepted?

The words from Orihara Izaya resurfaced in her mind.

- "If you really want everyday to be steady and comfortable, then it'd be better to simply cut all the people you care about."
- Wrong…..
- "You only need to become the queen, and the world would be peaceful."
- No….. Not like that…..!

Feeling depressed while also holding a strong malice, Anri silently gulped.

In the silent atmosphere, only Dokusonmaru rolled around on the floor.

Seeing the kitten's simple-hearted appearance, Anri also let out a sound of laughter, the tension in her body alleviated.

- …….Aiya?
- Speaking of, this apartment….. should allow pets……

Restlessness once again reappearing, Anri again began stroking the cat's belly.

"Good kitty."

Niekawa Haruna, as well as the mysterious surprise attack from a masked person, Anri's aprtment has encountered attacks from suspicious figures twice.

And her room is now already known by a third person –

Sonohara Anri is enjoying her tranquil time.

In a calm and steady atmosphere with the cat, and pondering about what's happening with Mikado and Kida.

※※※※※

Ikebukuro, Sunshine main road

"Then… if we have to go, how about Russian sushi? I can pay."

When Kida offered this, Shizuo and Tom convinced Vorona, and the group began walking towards Russian sushi.

“I also have to make an apology to Simon…..”

“What is it? You know Simon?”

Shizuo asked. But Tom beat Kida to answer:

“He’s the leader of Yellow turbans, of course his network of connection is broad.”

“……”

“…….I noticed it just then, what kind of bad memories do you have of Yellow turbans? Ah, I went too far, I won’t chase you for answers.”

Tom said casually while looking at the silent lowered head. But Vorona, who was completely oblivious to the surrounding atmosphere opened her mouth and said:

“I have a question. The existence of Yellow turbans traces over 100 years ago in the Christian era. I don’t think that leader still lives in the world presently. Or another possibility, this young boy is the spiritual existence of the headless rider?”

“……Miss, you’re use of words are kinda strange.”

- The headless rider.
- Now that I think about it, that headless rider also knows Mikado.
- Izaya that bastard, just said something like “It’s better if you ask Mikado yourself.”

Recalling the said bastards face, Kida couldn’t help but clench his teeth, but considered that there was a person next to him with the same impulse except with a much higher degree than his own, he could only let himself calm down a little and not utter that name.

- Ah ah.
- I really didn’t think of this. Not only did I just relate to Heiwajima Shizuo, my own thoughts are wavering.
- ……..
- No, if Shizuo met with Anri and Mikado before, what should I say.

While he was pondering this, at the exact time he is preparing to talk and took a deep breathe –

“Warning. Please continue your forward walking and listen to my report.”

Vorona suddenly spoke quietly with a sharp voice. Startled, Kida immediately stopped the breath he took.

“?” “……?” “What is it?”

The other three all wore confused faces, but Vorona continued with a serious voice:

“Please face the front.”

Vorona’s consistently strange Japanese pronounciation, along with her earnest serious expression created a strange tense feeling that caused Kida to shiver a little.

“There is someone following. Distance is gradually decreasing. Hostility unclear. Please be alert.”

“……..Based on speculation. Stalkers are often more than one person.”

※※※※※

Shinra's apartment

"In brief, go to Kasuka's apartment to have a look first, then go to Ruri's apartment. I think the stalker ambushing Ruri's home is the highest possibility."

Celty put on the safety helmet, and gripped the front door.

"……This way all 3 people are okay, but I'm a bit worried."

"What?"

Looking at Celty's tilted helmet, Shinra had a hard time saying in a low voice:

"If you just linger around the apartment….. then… the police officers might think you're the stalker…?"

With a similar conclusion made in the past, Celty paused for a moment then walked out the door.

The entrance doorbell sounded, Shinra looked in the gate's direction in surprise.

Ordinarily, he would think Celty forgot something and had just come back for it — but today she remembered to bring the keys. Because of the Aoba incident, the gate remained lock even with Shinra inside, but Celty could use a shadow key to open it.

Due to the recent stalker incidents, Shinra approaches the gate cautiously.

The peephole showed a man that's likely an express deliveryman.

Though Shinra lives in a high-class apartment, it was constructed early, and had not set the identification authentication system.

"Express."

Hearing that from the other side of the door, Shinra opened the gate relieved.

Just to be on the safe side, he still left the catena while opening the door.

As long as he signs the receipt and lets the man place the item at the door, it will be fine. Shinra thought.

"Ok, I'll take the seal.…"

In the instant that Shinra put his hand in his white lab coat pocket —

Suddenly, an iron slab appeared from the gate slit.

A black sawblade.

Shinra detected it too late.

With a "chaka" sound, the gate catena was cut, and the man took the moments advantage to raise it.

"……"

The gate slowly opened, the man wearing the express uniform smiled.

"You're….. not express delivery?"

Looking at Shinra's shrinking shoulders –

The man comes forward menacingly and grabs Shinra's head.

Immediately, Shinra feels his brain bulge, a blood vessel was likely closed off.

- Ah, this isn't good…
- Just like…. when Shizuo's around….
- I'm fainting…….--------
- Ah, what is this guy holding…
- Won't…. also…. come again..…?
- …Oh? I'll….. like this… die?

In front of Shinra, who was quickly losing consiousness –

The man in the express uniform kicks him again.

- ----------Cel……ty.
- Then, Kasuka's apartment…..

So that she wasn't noticed by the white motorcycle, Celty drove as far away as possible along alleyways to Kasuka's apartment.

When she arrived at a row of similar buildings, and prepared to confirm the address, she took out her phone.

Starting the guidance system, she began to investigate Kasuka's address, but at this moment –

The picture suddenly vanished, and an electronic bell rang from her phone.

Seeing the telephone number that appeared before the map, Clety tilted her head in doubt before answering the phone.

- Huh? Isn't this Mikado's number?
- Why would he call now?

Did he realize Anri is worried about his situation? But it wouldn't be Celty that Mikado would talk to, what would he want from Celty?

Thinking like this, she hesitated about answering –

- Huh…?
- But he's not texting me, he's calling…..?

Calling Celty, who couldn't speak, it must be an emergency.

Thinking of this, Celty pressed the answer button, and put her phone next to her helmet.

"Hey Hey! Is this Celty!"

Mikado's voice reached Celty's auditory system clearly.

"If you can hear me, then tap on the telephone receiver."

Celty tapped on the receiver according to his instruction, immediately, the other side let out a half-anxious half-relieved sound.

"Great! If you can hear me then we can exchange words! Celty, right now are you in your apartment?!"

- What is it?

- Do you want to come to where I am?

But Celty dropped this idea immediately.

Because Mikado's tense sound doesn't appear to be about that.

"If you're outside, go back immediately!"

"?"

"Celty, you might not have a problem….. but Shinra's in danger!"

※※※※※

Some night, in Ikebukuro

"Ah, one glimpse and it's obvious who's behind this."

After listening to the report from the person on the phone, a youth wearing a black coat hung up his phone, smiled bitterly and thought to himself.

"Not only is it the underworld, this time it entangled a small bludger, Shinra has really bad luck."

With a 'cacha' sound, the man sitting in his chair stood up, and turns to gaze at the windows' scenery.

From a high-rise apartment at some Ikebukuro station. Looking at the core street scenery, the man quirked his lips, and like a child who had just found some candy – thought aloud.

"In the end, it's just not right without me."

※※※※※

Chatroom

Gaki [There's also only a few people on today.]

Sharo [How come it seems like it's only the new people.]

Chrome [It couldn't be because we kept saying the senior characters are very difficult?]

Sharo [You're thinking too much.]

Sharo [Today, Bakyura also hasn't come?]

Saki [Yeah. Seems very busy.]

Gaki [I see, actually I also use my phone for this network.]

Sharo [Huh, no way?]

Sharo [Typing on the phone can be that quick, that's really admirable]

Saki [How amazing.]

Gaki [I'm going to be over-confident now.]

Sharo [Speaking of which, isn't there any interesting topics? Everyday I stand there gloomily working for the whole day, my younger sister also acts like a house fly in May incessantly telling me to work more earnestly, so it seems flat chests causes narrow heart defects.]

Saki [I don't think that has any relation to the size of breasts.]

Gaki [Is this sexual harassment?]

Chrome [Interesting topic.]

Sharo [Wait, aiya, maybe saying it like that was hard to understand, but seriously if you guys met my sister I'm afraid your head will be ripped apart.]

Gaki [What topic?]

Sharo [Yes? Oh, did you find out something, Chrome?]

Chrome [It's still regarding the topic of Hijiribe Ruri's stalker, it seems the criminal is in Dollars. I just heard this at my friends' house, the accuracy of this can't be garanteed.]

Chrome [Ah, that's right, this can only be said here, you absolutely cannot report this in any of Hijiribe Ruri fanclub sites.]

Gaki [Understood.]

Saki [I know without you having to tell me.]

Sharo [But what happens if other people seach out this chatroom?]

Private message: Chrome [How's this?]

Private message: Sharo [Oh.]

Private message: Sharo [This could also be done.]

Private message: Gaki [Oh, what is this!]

Private message: Saki [It's private message, Bakyura and me always use this.]

Private message: Chrome [The people in the chatroom can now also be said to be appointed as members of this secret channel.]

Private message: Chrome [Like this, it can't be searched for, and it won't be left in the record.]

Private message: Sharo [That's true.]

Private message: Saki [Because this is an important matter.]

Private message: Gaki [Then, what did you guys hear about the stalker.]

Private message: Chrome [Right….. does Hijiribe Ruri's stalker really exist?]

Private message: Chrome [I feel like this must be a black-listed person from the company.]

Private message: Gaki [Yeah, however in the weekly magazine it said all them had alibis……]

Private message: Chrome [It's because of that, this fact is very important.]

Private message: Chrome [These Hijiribe Ruri black-listed people.]

Private message: Chrome [They're a group!]

Private message: Sharo [Huh? What does that mean?]

Private message: Chrome [I’m saying the stalker isn’t just one person.]

Private message: Chrome [Deliberately displaying this so-called one person, when in fact it’s different people with distinctive actions.]

Private message: Gaki [Haha, this way there would be no proof of the scene.]

Private message: Gaki [As long as they have an alibi in one incident, it’s possible to get rid of suspicion, so that’s how it is.]

Private message: Chrome [Exactly.]

Private message: Chrome [But it’s really interesting.]

Private message: Chrome [This rumour appeared on the Dollars website.]

Private message: Chrome [It seems there’s additional inside information, this Dollars organization is really interesting.]

Private message: Gaki [Maybe it’s only to take the blame off themselves.]

-------- Kanra has entered the chatroom --------

Private message: Chrome [Aiya.]

Kanra [Hello everyone! Everyone’s idol Kanra-chan returns in triumph!]

Kanra [Aiya aiya aiya aiya? How come everyone’s conversation before stopped?]

Kanra [It couldn’t be you all went into a secret channel for something incestuous, right?!]

Kanra [Yaaa~~~~~! Sexual Harrassment! Oh, sexual harassment everywhere!]

Kanra [Ah ya ya, how come everyone has an ID I don’t recognize.

Private message: Chrome [……Who is this? This super excitable person….]

Private message: Gaki [I heard about him from the person that invited me here.]

Private message: Gaki [It seems it’s an old member of this chatroom.]

Private message: Saki [Also the control person?]

Private message: Sharo [Attack!]

Private message: Chrome [Really? Ah, I think it’s likely a transvestite…….]

※※※※※

©2010 Ryohgo Narita

# DRRR!!

## 四章『迷走@Stakers』

# Chapter 4 “Confusion @ Stalkers”

It’s not the worst.

It’s not the worst that could happen in this situation.

It could have lead to killing or kidnapping.

Even though it was excrutiating to think, “It’s not the worst” were the only words she could keep telling herself –

Because in view of the stalker’s behaviour, this situation was not unpredictable, as long as he was taken down before he got to Ruri, it would be okay.

This was what Celty thought.

But, perhaps this needed consideration.

Perhaps there had been some negligence.

These days, she’s still gets pursued by hoodlums, speeding cars and police officers, yesterday she even had to deal with helicopters and a machine gun.

Because of this, the stalker didn’t really pose that much of a problem –

Her heart held such a misunderstanding.

But if it was after Anri got attacked by Niekawa Haruna.

If it was after seeing the stalker on the news.

If she could have only worked out the stalkers weird actions in time –

Even so, regardless of how she takes in the situation, she’s unable to change the outcome.

And for Celty, this ‘outcome’ is –

Right now, the scene in front of her, Shinra’s whole body was covered in his blood and he was having difficulty breathing.

※※※※※

- Shin…… ra?

Once she got home, Celty crashed through the front door, and in front of her eyes emerged an unbelievable scene.

- “It forms a sharp contrast to your black!”

Shinra who always wore a white coat, arrogantly said these words.

Though this isn’t the first time she’s seen the white coat stained with blood –

But this time, Shinra was lying in the corridor and wearing the moistened white coat covered with undoubtedly his own blood.

“_____”

Celty tried to scream.

Wanted to shout Shinra’s name.

However, with no head, Celty is naturally unable to vibrate the air in order to make a sound, what she could do was hurry and run up to Shinra’s side and hug him.

At this, Shinra finally noticed Celty, he rounded his eyes towards her.

"…..Ah ……Cel……..ty?"

Shinra's head and mouth dribbled with blood, he really shouldn't be talking.

But – even in this situation, Shinra still smiled.

Looking at Celty's face, he showed a relieved smile.

This smile, wasn't relief for himself, but to try and make her relax.

"It's alright….. It's not as bad as it looks….. my life's not in danger….. it's only…… bones…… several are broken…. Ah, I think it's still better then when I was beaten up by Shizuo, so it should be alright….. I didn't think that guy…… would tirelessly…. keep kicking so many times….."

"Stop talking! I'm going to call the ambulance!"

"No don't, calling the ambulance…. would be terrible, ….besides, how can you call them?"

- !

Thinking about it, Celty couldn't talk on the phone and couldn't ask Shinra to do it.

But, if I dial the number, won't they automatically inquire the caller? Celty had heard before, the hospital can send over faxes for people who are mute.

- Paper, where's the paper? Oh right, I can make paper from my shadow…. That's no good.
- Ah, Shinra, please don't die! Don't abandon me!

Celty fell into panic, Shinra looked like he had no more energy and kept his eyes closed but still continued talking.

"Give my father…… or Emilia… a call…."

After Shinra used his energy to say that, he looked at Celty and showed her an incomparably gentle smile.

"Celty….. grief will conceal your beautiful spirit… for me….. please smile….."

After saying that, his conciousness fell into darkness.

- Please No!
- Don't talk like you're going to die!

Celty used her shadow to gently wrap around Shinra, and lifted him up.

Then jumped down the staircase, making the shadow into a spider lattice, she slowly lowered him to the ground.

In the parking lot, Shooter seemed to also find Shinra's condition alarming and let out a quiet neigh.

Celty used her shadow to place Shinra on top of Shooter, and changed Shooter into a shape that looked like it could transport a newborn babe.

To make sure Shinra's body doesn't tilt – Celty installed a cargo conveyer transporter, similar to the ones on noodle shop delivery motorbikes, on Shooter and with 120% effort, sped away quickly from the parking lot.

- Dammit, why….. why!
- I'm such an idiot! I was too careless about the stalker!
- I….. am so incapable!

- I've been with Shinra who's an underground doctor for such a long time already… and yet I don't know a single emergency nursing procedure….!
- I…. just what did I see Shinra as!

Still not knowing who the culprit was, she carried an intense anger for herself and sped along the night's street.

Though her feelings were filled with regret and anger, she was still praying desperately for Shinra's safety.

※※※※※

Somewhere in Ikebukuro

Adabashi Kisuke gazed after a black motorbike that had just sped past him – and let out a strange laughter.

Then, he slowly pulled out his phone and sent a message to someone.

His face was filled with happiness, like his world was successfully complete.

In Adabashi's mind, this reappearance was even more distinct and pleasurable then the kicking.

This image of destruction.

He hopes that Hijiribe Ruri in his 'fantasy' will be destroyed in his heart.

In front of his eyes.

On the surface of his flesh.

Under his feet.

Between his fingers and toes.

Taste it on his tongue.

Hear it through his eardrums.

Acting in accordance with his soul's rhythm –

Destroy –

Completely break Hijiribe Ruri apart, merge her into his body and make her become a part of himself.

Adabashi imagined and actually expected this type of unimaginable and disturbing outcome, and felt 'happy'.

Adabashi Kisuke loved Hijiribe Ruri.

The word love is used, but perhaps it's better to say that that is what he believes.

As the son of the head of an insurance company, Kisuke lived a wealthy life.

Only, because of his crude dispositon since he was small, he was constantly avoided and treated like an unlucky star.

Knowing that his father often participated in many suspicious meetings – he initially suspected his father of having an affair, and followed behind him once.

However, what he saw – at that time was a scary scene of a female model being sold – Hijiribe Ruri, and being used as a sacrificial offering.

- Scary.

That was what he originally felt looking at the scene.

But, at the same time he realized.

The seemingly harmless young girl – being injured by his familiar father, tormented his heart.

At the same time that he felt scared, he also felt excited.

It wasn't simply a distorted sexual desire.

His feelings surged a strong instinct regarding her.

If possible, he wished it wasn't his father, but his own hands that was breaking and tarnishing the girl who looked like a goddess, tormenting her heart, destroying her existence.

It can be said in that moment, Adabashi Kisuke fell in love for the first time.

His love-filled eyes constantly looked to Hijiribe Ruri – at the time his father was killed by the killing monster 'Hollywood', Kisuke immediately understood.

The one who killed his father, was Hijiribe Ruri.

What slept inside her body, an abnormal strength stronger than any human.

After understanding all of it, his expectation changed into faith.

However – the direction of his faith wasn't Ruri, but the sensation he'll feel when he achieves his goal of destroying Ruri. Pure joy was what Adabashi Kisuke viewed as his faith 'god'.

For him, Hijiribe was the Mary from whom god emerged.

The one who introduced him to the Dollars website was one man.

After his father's funeral, he planned to contact Hijiribe Ruri – but he was scolded many times by the entertainment company staff.

However, after several months, a man contacted him.

It was the same man that introduced his father to Hijiribe Ruri – Yodogiri Jinnai.

Through him, Adabashi Kisuke gradually stepped into society's underworld. Receiving all of Yodogiri's various information resulted in him now commanding a website community that stalks Hijiribe Ruri.

In the website community, information can only be read by the few select members and banned from all others. As for new members, they are chosen by observing their reaction to the controversial slogan of 'Hijiribe Ruri's secret photo's!' posted on the Dollars website.

On the surface, the leader of this community is one man who calls himself 'Red Carpet', so this doesn't get much attention. Consequently, they pull people who are only interested in the controversial advert into a hidden site, then drag them into an even deeper hidden page.

For Hijiribe Ruri, he does not hesitate to commit crimes, even if it means killing Hijiribe Ruri herself.

Adabashi Kisuke didn't realize, close to ten people just like him gathered together. Just like Adabashi, they are all included in the blacklist of the entertainment office. This website community is filled with these type of people.

Can Hijiribe Ruri really make people so fanatical? –

Adabashi couldn't answer, he only acted out in accordance to his desires.

While on one side they manufacture alibi's, at the same time they are gradually closing in on Hijiribe Ruri.

Though it's not known whether anyone actually believes it, all the people in the website know that Hijiribe Ruri has 'abnormal' strength, however, the secret that she's the killing monster 'Hollywood', only one person knows.

This feeling of superiority excites him, and makes him crazier.

Destroy. Destroy Hijiribe Ruri.

With his own hands.

Generally speaking, wanting to destroy the body of the killing monster 'Hollywood' is impossible.

But Adabashi had thought about it.

If Ruri's heart is destroyed then the killing monster 'Hollwood' would emerge, then exerting even more brutal destruction on the monsters' heart would be even better.

The photo Yodogiri gave him was already sent to the office she currently works at.

After some time passes, we'll spread it online or at publishing houses.

Though Adabashi thought he had everything prepared, he also had other things to do.

Hijiribe Ruri and her lover Hanejima Yuuhei.

Worried about the stalker situation, they had discussed it with several acqaintances and family members.

Adabashi initially thought he had to be careful about the headless rider's housemate, but he found out that the man in the white coat was small and weak. After he dealt him enough suffering. Adabashi whispered in his ears the words: "Hijiribe Ruri will be mine."

If that guy remembered that, then Hijiribe Ruri would have already heard about the situation.

Right now, the other people involved with her are also being attacked by the members of the online community.

- How regretful.
- If it was possible, I wanted to kill the cat personally.

However, regarding the headless rider, he received the order not to touch her by Yodogiri. In order to completely destroy Hijiribe Ruri, in order to completely love her, that man is still necessary.

Although he understood this, Adabashi Kisuke's feelings are still vexed by his distorted desires.

- The cat.
- The cat Hijiribe Ruri was hugging.
- I really want to pinch it to death Ah ah ah
- I really want to be with Ruri and love it Ah ah.

The person who took Hanajima Yuuhei's cat was a Raira female high school student, it appears she's living alone.

Though he doesn't the know the relationship among them, but, destroying whatever intimacy is between them by going to this female student whereabouts and killing the cat, won't it give Hijiribe Ruri huge phsychological trauma?

While envying his companion who was carrying out this plan, Adabashi comforts himself by thinking 'lets just enjoy this first year of destroying Ruri little by little'. And as such, lost in his thoughts he let out a strange laughter on Ikebukuro's avenue.

Suddenly – Hijiribe Ruri's song reverberated from his phone.

While listening intently, Adabashi pressed down on the talk button and enjoyed the pleasant mood of cutting off Ruri's singing.

However, on the other side of phone, a different sound destroyed this pleasant mood.

"You never, you never said it would turn out like this!"

"?"

He was familiar with this voice.

It wasn't Yodogiri.

It the person he was just envying –

The community site member who was responsible for 'destroying' that female high school student and the cat.

This man used to gamble in races, and is always constantly wearing a short coat – his voice is filled with anxiety, his tone was pleading and angry towards Adabashi.

"Trapped, the one who's trapped is me! What, what's with these masked guys!"

"Masked guys…..?"

"These guys were waiting to ambush me! I went to that high school girl's apartment and prepared to start the fire! Then they suddenly came out and attacked me….. Ahh! They're coming, Ahhhhhhhhhhh!"

"Oi, what's going on? Oi!"

Adabashi shouted into the phone, but after that, he only heard a yell then the line went dead.

"……"

It must be a coincidence.

It must be.

Hijiribe Ruri wouldn't have hired a bodyguard for that cat?

Or, are the others involved?

Though he could think up countless explanations, thinking about the urgent situation arising, Adabashi couldn't help but curse.

From that call, he knew only one fact –

That high school girl and cat were still okay.

Adabashi belted out his strange laughter again, then turned and walked toward the nearby parking lot.

He sat down in his car, and prepared to go to that high school girls' apartment himself.

Though his companion was in danger, he still felt joyous in his heart.

Destroying his companion, caused him to feel an even deeper, even thicker – love for Hijiribe Ruri.

※※※※※

Sunshine 60 passes near the main road, Russian Sushi Restaurant

“You said we’re being followed, what kind of person is it, a delinquent?”

Tom asked Vorona while walking.

“Conclusion is very difficult to obtain, only that it’s different from a professional soldier or assassin. Though it’s possible he is an average person, we must enhance vigilence.”

Hearing Vorona’s serious response, Kida walked anxiously while paying careful attention to his surroundings, Shizuo also looked around seriously.

Although it’s nearly the evening, the streets are still crowded.

Tom held his glasses and rotated his neck till a crack was heard.

“….Is it payback from the guy that got beat up by Shizuo, or is it revenge over debt collecting.… Either way, with so many people around us, nothing can be done, I’ll ask the boss of Russian sushi to let us use the back door…. Then acting as the lookout, we quietly…”

Tom was saying the following in a low voice, ….his words are cut off by Vorona.

“He’s coming….”

“Huh?”

Tom said startled.

Vorona immediately turned around.

And only saw a man holding some object walk over — the man saw Vorana’s sudden movement and hesitated, his body unconsciously shivered.

Though his hesitation only lasted a moment, it was enough for Vorona, and even if he weren’t frightened, Vorona’s action would still be too quick for him.

“Oh, Ah…. Ahhhhhhhhh!?”

Twisting her body, she sharply kicked the man’s stomach.

The dropped the object in his hand, a small medicine bottle.

The lid cracked open and liquid flowed out, spilling onto the man’s shoes.

“Owwahhhhhhhh!”

The man called out pitifully, and while cluthing his abdomen, he hurriedly tried to take off his shoes.

The liquid that spilled over his shoes started to deteriate the material, it perhaps contained acid.

“Hey, spilling acid on the street, what are you playing at….”

Tom calls out startled, Shizuo feels his head throb.

“This guy… what did you plan to do with this….?”

Saying this, Shizuo stepped forward, preparing to lift the guy up —

Kida suddenly spotted another man quietly coming toward Shizuo from behind.

The male was very short, his right hand holding a sharp broken glass.

- Oh, no way!

“Watch out!”

While saying this, Kida circled around Shizuo’s body.

He planned to kick away the broken glass.

But, in the next instant, this action became meaningless.

A youth from the side corner suddenly ran over, pulled out an electric shock gun – and with force hit the man’s lower abdomen with his weapom.

“…….Zzttzzzzztzzzztzzzzz!”

The gun shocked the man close to the kidney, the man’s entire body convulsed and the broken glass dropped to the ground.

After watching the man fall to the ground, the mysterious youth smiled, then left unceremoniously.

- Huh?
- Who was that?

Kida stared at the youth leaving, till ‘an item’ caught his attention, and caused his heart to jump.

That is – on the mysterious youths’ neck hangs a handkerchief with a shark tooth pattern.

Kida felt all his hairs stand up.

It wasn’t because he was frightened, but he was surprised.

- That guy……
- Blue……. Squares….?

Kida quickly made a decision and told Shizuo and the others:

“Sorry! I have to go now! I’ll definitely talk to you guys later!”

After he finished, he lowered his head in a bow, and then ran after the boy.

“Ah? Hey!”

Tom called out while grabbing the broken glass out of the short man’s hand. Hearing the sound, Kida turned around to look and remembered the reason why he returned to this city again.

- Why did those guys help Shizuo?
- Is it just good intentions? Or some sort of plan? Or some inside problem?
- Speaking of which, is the style of the handkerchief the same? If I got the wrong people, then what do I do?
- Dammit….. it’s not the time to think about this!

Kida tried to put these thoughts behind him, and continued to follow the boy.

Pursuing this may not have an answer.

Even if it ends up like that, he still has to continue to pursue.

- A guy in blue squares.
- What are they up to this time…..!?

※※※※※

Anri's Apartment

On hearing the message alert tone, Anri temporarily stopped playng with Dokusonmaru and picked up her phone.

- It was sent by Celty-san.

Is she worried about the cat?

Anri thought this while opening up the message –

"Shinras been hurt stalker came Anri be careful"

"!?"

Upon reading the anxious-filled message, Anri's entire body froze.

"Is Celty-san okay!?"

After she replied with this message.

She hurriedly looked out the window.

Right now, there wasn't any commotion.

However there was a sound outside just then, she just didn't notice.

Anri looked out the window for a while, the message alert rang out again. Not knowing whether it was because the sender was flustered, there were no puntucation marks in the content.

"I'm okay sending Shinra to hospital Anri be careful"

- What happened?
- I hope Kishitani-sensei is okay…..

Anri worried, suddenly, she came up with a thought, are they after Dokusonmaru, and Anri again looked out her window.

Why can the stalker so easily destroy my steady lifestyle?

The things I love, why can he damage any of it.

Anri felt confused about the actions of this stalker that was so different from Mika, suddenly, as if she just thought of something, she lowered her head to ponder.

- If I don't injure, then I can't love…..

She listened to the surging 'love sound' repeating within her heart, staring down at her feet, she said to herself.

“Me and Saika…. are the same.”

※※※※※

Somewhere in Ikebukuro

Kida chased the boy who might be a member of Blue Squares.

In front, the boy seems aware that he’s being chased, he continually runs and often turns his head to look back at Kida.

Kida recalled a time before when he received a surprise attack and took the consequences for his actions.

- Don’t stop walking.

When faced with the blue squares, he had an overwhelming sense of fear, but more importantly, he couldn’t save an important person.

Always causing the dispute, but never participating in it.

- Don’t…. stop walking.

Kida, who hadn’t run in a long time, could feel his feet cry out in grief.

- Dammit, physical education is very important….!

Kida felt at fault for leaving school. Even with this, he still pursued the blue squares boy.

Away from the busy street, the boy stopped at a place where nobody was around.

“…..What are you doing?”

The boy obstructed his mouth with the handkerchief and asked Kida.

Kida standing 2 meters away from the boy, hands on his knees, took a deep breath and said.

“Though I don’t really understand, but, in that situation back there I owe you a thanks, so thank you.”

“……I don’t believe you chased me all this way just to say thanks!”

“That’s right….. if I say this wrong, then I apologize, are you in Blue Squares?”

“!”

On hearing the word Blue Squares, the boy reacted.

“It seems I guessed right.”

“Who are you?”

The boy increased his vigilence, and stared at Kida with hostility, Kida adjusted his breath and with a firm glance asked.

“After Yellow Turbans, are you now going after Dollars?”

“……..”

“What are you guys planning? Who is your leader? Is that gushing guy out of jail already?”

Kida continued interegating, the blue squares boy opened his mouth and said with a provocative expression.

“Are you related to the Yellow Turbans?”

“……What about it?”

“Your time has already ended, also, I only helped that guy who wore a windproof coat, I wasn’t helping you.”

“I’m relieved to hear that, because everytime you guys have something going on, fights start breaking out, this is my question before the fight.”

Kida makes his hand joints crack, and his gaze became sharp.

“I have a grudge with the blue squares, that’s something that’ll never change.”

“Ah ah, I’m really scared now. If you have any original words…..”

The laughing youth took his eyes off Kida slightly.

But then there were words spoken –

It came from behind Kida, another boy wielding a nightstick.

“Come… and get it!”

The nightstick was swung down forcefully, but Kida –

※※※※※

Somewhere near Anri’s apartment

“Hey, did you find that arson guy?”

“He escapes really fast, that guy.”

Several youths are pacing back and forth in a narrow lane, and carrying on with conversations such as this.

They are all wearing the shark tooth design handkerchief and a ski mask that only reveals the eyes, walking everywhere in the lane, searching for someone.

Maybe because they were tired, their footsteps slowed down patrolling the area.

The nearby bustling street is far away, this so-called alley actually consists of 23 districts, and almost no one passes by.

“Aoba that guy is…..”

“That guy should definitely also he here searching…”

“Oh, there’s a car coming, move to the road side.”

After saying this, the boys walked over to the road side –

Entering the narrow laneway, the car switched off its headlight and gradually slowed down.

“?”

The car stopped in front of the boys, and the engine was shut off.

It’s weird.

Stopping the car in the middle of the road in this type of situation is definitely not normal.

Seeing several boys wearing masks that covered their whole face and intentionally walking over to the roadside, an average person would drive directly pass right? Is it necessary to stop especially in front of this kind of suspicious gang?

At this moment in which they were having these doubts – a man from inside the car climbed out.

Through the weak rays of the streetlights, they could see that the man's stature was slender, but were unable to guess his age and expression.

However, the strange laughter that emitted from the man's mouth caused the youths to feel a dangerous aura.

"What are you doing?"

One of the boys asked.

In answer – the slender man immediately moved in front of the boy, and shrugging his shoulders replied.

"I only wanted to ask you for directions."

"Directions?"

Hearing this, the boy's looked at one another in blank dismay.

In front of a group of people that wore masked hats, obviously a hoodlums group, would someone ask them for directions?

This was obviously very strange, the youths looked the man over –

At this moment, the boy standing at the front suffered a kick to his temple.

Boy A immediately fell unconscious, not even letting out a pitiful yell.

The rest of the boys stiffened, this guy – Adabashi Kisuke smiled, then said.

"Then please, guide me."

"Comfortably lead me to where my beloved Ruri is."

※※※※※

Somewhere in Ikebukuro

"….Really, making me waste so much effort."

The one saying this – is Kida, along with a bleeding head.

Though he avoided the nightsticks long jab, his skin was abraided. He used his handkerchief to clean the blood off his face, and looked at the two blue square members lying on the ground.

"But, I was really shocked, both guys just fainted suddenly."

They were definitely not weak opponents, though Kida excelled at fighting, if he didn't rapidly stun one before the other, if both had attacked at the same time, then the one lying on the floor would have been himself.

However, both of them fainting was not planned, now the questioning couldn't continue.

- If a police officer comes, it'll be bad.
- Nothing to it, I'll borrow this for a while.

Kida took out the phone from the boy's pocket, and starts to browse the message record.

Though he hates doing this, but in order to know the opposite parties information, there is no alternative.

At least, he hopes to verify what Blue squares infiltrating Dollars is up to.

- These things, I thought I wouldn't have to help Mikado with…

Kida was thinking this while continuing to browse –

Suddenly, his whole body stiffened.

Mikado Ryuugamine.

Because – he saw in the sms message the name of his best friend who he was just thinking about.

Moreover, it's not from sending records sections – but recent receiving records.

※※※※※

There have been lots of times since Ryuugamine Mikado received his blue squares membership that he's gotten experience being beaten – he's revealed his poor form in such situations, but continues to input his instructions.

"Congregrate more peope around Anri's house, continue to strengthen the security. Don't let Anri find out."

Mikado knew Adabashi's plan.

Inside Dollars webpage, Mikado realized the stalkers trends, and exchanged the information with the whole group of supervisors. Though that wasn't technically legal, it was similar to hackers spreading a virus, but Mikado still didn't hesitate to do it.

In the evening after obtaining information inside the headline "Information on Ruri's acquaintances", he found pictures of Celty's villa and Shizuo.

Besides getting the data, he also prepared several people to discuss the topic.

'Under broad daylight, they wouldn't dare do anything', but this thought was quickly corrected in his mind, because from previous records, Mikado understood that this was an unusual group.

Mikado immediately called Celty –

But to hide his identity as Dollars founder, he didn't call Anri.

He didn't want her to worry, but through his own hands, and through Dollars he had to protect her.

Therefore, he didn't call Anri.

Though it wasn't necessary to worry about Shizuo he sent several people to prevent the stalker's movements.

Ryuugamine Mikado did not consider Anri's safety as the priority, but the ideal 'Dollars'.

Not one person, not even Mikado himself, realized this point.

Except Kuronuma Aoba.

- Bastards.
- Mikado……
- What are you doing…..
- What are you doing, Mikado!

Kida's heart cried out, this impulse spread throughout his body and urged him to run forward.

In front is the direction to Anri's house.

Run.

Run.

Run.

The impulse that surged through his body, restlessness, anger, all of it transmitted from his feet to the earth, with his body leading the way.

From the message content, Kida knew it was Mikado sending out instructions.

Knew that blue squares have infiltrated Dollars.

Before Mikado is taken in, he knew what he had to do, knew it wasn't going to be easy coming back to Ikebukuro –

What was in front of him, was in fact Blue Squares' first host, Mikado Ryuugamine.

- Mikado…..

The leader of Blue Squares was said to be Kuronuma Aoba.

But, issuing the instructions to them was without a doubt Mikado.

It must have been Kuronuma Aoba, or Orihara Izaya that had a secret plan.

Though I can make a lot of conjectures, but the fact that Mikado is the one issuing orders won't change.

- Do you know what your doing….!

Mikado seems to want to use Blue squares like chess pieces, to get rid of the bad parts of Dollars.

- Dammit…..

He understands the reason.

It was during the vacation in May, the conflict with Toramaru.

- Dammit…..
- If I knew this from the start…… I should have said something that time….

But, recalling those times right now isn't going to help.

- While hiding in a safe place and issuing orders, you think you're a king.…
- But whether you feel like it's a game or whatever…..
- The fact that you've stepped into the underworld isn't going to change!

Kida hates that he can't just crash into Mikado's house, and use force to prevent him from doing any of this. But he can't do that.

- Anri's in danger, what's the meaning of this.

The final data received showed Anri's name, this surprised Kida.

It looks like, Anri is being pursued, Kida didn't have time to ponder and immediately hurried off.

- Mikado…. what kind of fight have you gotten into!

- Damn…. Damn!

The one who made him angry was himself.

He couldn't forgive his own weakness, he continued to run, remembering his responsibility, in order to redeem his past.

- I'm….. just like that……!
- Damn…..!

※※※※※

Near Anri's room

"….Damn, that was really bad."

A man in a work suit behind Anri's apartment adjusted his tie.

- I finally came back, I hope no one was monitoring me.
- Where did those guys hurry off to, what happened?
- Damn…. I dropped one of the cigarette lighters and oil pots.
- It was taken by those guys…. And that lighter was really expensive.
- Forget it, I still have a lot more to prepare the fire with.
- I'll quickly handle this then crawl into bed and imagine Ruri-chan crying.
- If a cat and a high school girl were burnt to death, it'll definitely be on the news.
- If a report related to Ruri-chan broadcasted, Ruri-chan will walk even deeper into the path of destruction.
- Really such a pity, thinking about if gets me excited!

While thinking about these warped ideas, the man took out an oil pot from his briefcase and started spraying gasoline at the back of anri's room.

After ignition he quickly returned to the front of the apartment, when the high school girl comes out he'll pour gasoline over her head, and burn her to death along with the cat.

- What a perfect plan.

The man thought this and laughed.

Though it was a plan to prevent being captured by the police, the man's thought processesses were somewhat underdeveloped. He didn't say if it was the perfect crime or how the plan was determined –

He didn't even understand what he was doing was considered a crime.

- Then Ruri-chan will become even more beautiful.

After he finished spraying the gasoline, he took out some matchsticks and prepared to ignite –

His eardrums suddenly received a shock from a sound completely unexpected in the current situation.

"Meow –"

"Ah."

It came from the side, a carefree sound.

He could tell it was a cat's cry and hurriedly turned his head.

There, he saw a young girl behind him.

"Ah…… what?"

"What are you doing? .....?"

The yong girl held a pet carrier, a cat's head poked out from inside and gave a happy cry.

"……!"

That was the cat that belongs to Ruri's lover Yuuhei – Dokusonmaru, the man immediately knew this – and took out a milk bottle filled with gasoline.

"Ah, ah ah ah, for Ruri-chan, please turn into ashes."

Though a bit flustered, the man said these strange words softly and prepared to pour the gasonline on the young girl.

However – the milk bottle suddenly shined silver, and fell from his hands.

"Wah…,"

At this time, the man realized.

The young girl in front of him, a sharp katana suddenly appeared in her hand.

And the girl's pupils changed into a bright red colour like a sunset, glowing.

"What, what is this? You, you're, using a katana is a crime, Hey! Hasn't your mother ever told you? Never point those things at other people."

Though the man was scared, he still said these words.

With no expression, Anri stared at the man and slowly approached him with 'Saika'.

She didn't understand what her burning to death would have to do with Ruri.

On another note, regardless of the reason – a man who wanted to kill someone and their cat on their first meeting is definitely not a normal person.

- So it can still love even these kinds of people, Saika is really amazing.

Anri thought objectively –

Then hesitantly, she used Saika to cut the stalker's ear.

"Wah…..! Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh……!"

Right now, a 'sound' started from the injury on the man's ear and a corrosion spread through him.

In Anri, it was already a custom melody of love, but for people who hear it for the first time, the impact received is like the whole world is substituted for this 'sound', this kind of overwhelming avalanche of sound, engraved the existence of Saika deeply into the man's soul.

Though only his ear was cut, the impact of the 'sound' was enough for the man to lose consiousness.

Anri coolly looked at the man and with pupils that were hard to detect and malice said.

"…….Forget about Hijiribe Ruri – as for attacking Kishitani-sensei, please surrender yourself over to the police."

Anri didn't know.

Though the man was in fact a stalker, he wasn't the culprit who attacked Shinra.

Also, the fact that there's more than one stalker, she didn't know.

Because of this, she felt relieved.

Because she thought the stalker incident has been solved.

Therefore – her heart felt resolved.

A hoarse sound came from behind Anri.

Anri first thought Dokusonmaru sneezed –

But, the place where the sound emitted was obviously in a different direction than the pet carrier.

"!?"

She felt her whole body shiver, and frantically turned around –

But, she immediatly encountered a violent kick in her lower abdomen –

Followed by a sharp metal sound, Anri's body flew backwards.

"……..!"

Anri had repelled many attackers before – but, the impact which she just received, compared to Niekawa Haruna and the masked attacker with the gardening shears, this one is actually much stronger, if it's a head-on fight, she could resist but with the others sudden attack she couldn't fend it off and her body flew back.

Anri didn't let out a cry, falling hard on the apartment wall, the air in her lungs was stolen from her.

The pet carrier holding Dokusonmaru was thrown into the air, and fell to the ground.

If Saika, who could sense killing auras, didn't use the knife's edge to protect her lower abdomen in time, Anri's ribs may have been broken.

However – though the knife's edge is sharp, the man's foot wasn't cut clean through.

"Shocked… you're shocked…. Aren't you?"

The man who suddenly attacked Anri looked at his slashed shoe and said with wide eyes.

"If I weren't wearing metal shoes, if would have been cut open…. What, you aren't human?"

"……."

Though Anri didn't say anything, but looking at her red pupils, the man – Adabashi Kisuke immediately continued to speak happily.

"Of course, Ruri-chan isn't human, birds with the same feather flock together…….!"

Adabashi gazed at Anri with not a bit of timidity after concluding she wasn't human.

He lifted his iron-protected shoes, and prepared to give Anri a fatal kick.

However –

“Tsssss –--”

The cover apparently opened when the pet carrier fell to the floor, Dokusonmaru jumped out and emitted a threatening hiss to Adabashi, then turned around and escaped.

“Ah….. don’t run…..”

Adabashi’s interest seemed to transfer immediately from Anri and started to chase after the one he felt was more important, the ‘cat that Hijiribe Ruri was hugging’.

Anri’s, who’s body was till in a state of paralysis, helplessly looked on as Adabashi rapidly disappered from her sight –

Remaining behind, was only the speech-impaired Anri, as well as the man lying on his side, with a dizzy consciousness and mumbling “Are you alright? Mother.” with his red eyes.

※※※※※

“Then, we’ll go to Sonohara-san’s apartment again.”

Saying this, the Blue square boys wearing handkerchiefs around their necks bowed to acknowledge one boy that was wearing a ski mask and goggles covering his entire face.

- It’s that guy, Kuronuma Aoba.

From his hiding place, Kida accidentally stumbled on these people, so he resolved to cross the nearby construction fence, hide behind it and spy on them.

- This road, is where Anri was attacked by those slashers….

Kida, crouched by the fence, observed the situation through the air vent.

If anyone saw him, they would sue him for illegal trespassing, but right now it’s not the time to worry about that.

- Ok, I’ll wait until Aoba’s alone, then I’ll grab him and ask him about the situation.
- No, wait…. right now I’m hidden, should I go to Anri’s place first?
- But, if I rashly go to Anri’s apartment, it’ll be bad if these guys find out…..

After several seconds of thinking this over, Kida resolved to find out if Anri was safe first, so he prepared to carefully make his way to Anri’s apartment.

But, in the next instant – a cat’s cry rang out across the roadside.

The cat was still young – a Scottish fold with ears folded forward, a species that runs faster than other cats in the countryside but doesn’t have the speed or fondness for running on asphalt road.

“Ah, what’s that, so cute!”

“Huh? This cat…..!”

The blue square boys were all talking while watching the cat that popped up beside them –

But, only after a few seconds, the cute cat turned 180 degrees and appeared in front of Kida.

- !?

Then, a man whose body is slender but had solid muscles and shining eyes –

The man walked closer to the boy's who had their backs turned, jumped up high and manouvered a kick to one of them.

"Don't block the way."

Following Adabashi's strange voice, the boy that got kicked flew forward forcefully.

The boy wearing the ski mask also fell down from colliding with his member, he immediately lost consiousness and lied on the ground twitching.

Being squashed under the other boy, his body moved but didn't wake.

"Wha….. what are you doing! Asshole!"

The other boys immediately surrounded Adabashi in a circle.

One pulls out a nightstick, all of them preparing to attack.

"Don't block the way, don't block me, brats!"

Calling out excitedly, Adabashi ran toward the boy's with no fear.

The boy holding the nightstick lifted his weapon but got kicked hard in the stomach.

He didn't even have time to wield his weapon.

He could only see the movement of the opponent lifting his foot.

The boys' body bent in half, stomach liquid poured out of his mouth and over his handkerchief.

"Wha……..!"

Adabashi saw that several youths have realized his strength by seeing their comrade beaten, but haven't used the oppurtunity to run –

He made every hit directed towards Ruri's suffering, wearing an infatuated smile that contained his love.

- This is bad.
- Though not comparable to Shizuo or Kadota, this guy is really strong.

Looking at the boy's who had fallen one after another in the blink of an eye, Kida unconsciously held his breathe.

He's the enemy after Anri?

Honestly speaking, Kida doesn't know if he can win against him in a head-on fight.

- Should I call the police….. tell Anri to evacuate?

If something happens, before Anri can get away, I'll have to hold that guy off myself… while Kida thought of this, he prepared to leave his hiding spot.

At this time, a shadow moved in his line of sight.

It was the boy that was lying crushed beneath a few of the others, wearing the ski mask and goggles.

He moved his fainted companions to the side walk, then started running towards the attacker –

And like he was just mimicking martial arts he gave a powerless kick to the attackers back –

A weak thump resounded, the attacker turned his head confused about the sound.

- What was that?
- That Aoba, is a complete amateur!

Kida didn't know.

Kuronuma Aoba wasn't good at fighting.

If the member called Yoshikiri who's in charge of fighting was there, the situation might have been different, but unfortunately, for the members of blue squares right now, he's not here.

Therefore, the people most capable of fighting, was only this attacker as well as Kida.

But Kida –

Adabashi slowly turned his head, and stared at the boy who had apparently done something to him.

He kept looking at the boy who was one head shorter then him, then let out a strange laughter.

"Your height…. is similar to Hijiribe Ruri's, of course, you don't have breasts."

"?"

"Okay, you'll be Hijiribe Ruri."

"…….? ……!?"

Adabashi used his huge hand to grasp the boy's neck.

"…….! ……..!!"

"Don't answer, if I hear a male voice, I can't make you become Ruri-chan."

Saying that, Asabashi used more force to grasp him.

Then, he let go of the struggling boys' neck and instead grabbed the back of his head.

The choking boy's head was then smashed against the wall.

The boy's goggles cracked, and his nose almost broke.

"Ah, it would be so good if you were Ruri."

Adabashi with an infatuated expression continued smashing the boy's face into the wall.

When he started, he seemed to be holding back, and didn't injure the boy too much – but, he gradually increased his strength, the pounding rhythm becoming more excited and crazy.

Seeing blood come out from the ski mask, Adabashi became almost frantically excited, he grabbed the back of the boy's head and prepared to use even more force to smash his face into the wall –

"You aren't giving me any time to call the police, you…… Sadist!"s

Along with a male's voice coming from behind him, Adabashi suffered a heavy kick to his crotch.

Though the attackers legs weren't that far apart, but the point of Kida's foot scraped past his knees and managed to puncture his crotch.

"Tssshhhhhhhh!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Not understanding what just happened the attacker crouched down.

The internal organs in the lower part of his body were in severe pain, his consciousness almost left him.

- Did I finish him?

Kida thought if he didn't do anything, Kuronuma Aoba would definitely be killed, so he decided not to call the police, but cross the fence and kick the attacker from behind.

After receiving the sudden attack, the victory should be clear, but –

"Wuyahhhh!"

Perhaps it was force of will overcoming the pain, though the attacker was staggering, he still managed to give Kida's ankles a sharp low kick.

"Aaaahhhhhhh!"

As if his legs were swept away by the rapid currents of a river, Kida was thrown to the ground.

"You……. You're also close to Ruri-chan?"

Kida initially thought he would be furious – but the attacker was smiling while saying these inexplicable words.

The attacker used his trembling right leg to step on Kida's abdomen.

"Killing you, would Ruri-chan be sad?"

"What are you talking about? Who is Ruri-chan…..?"

Because his abdomen was being stepped on, Kida's reply was soft enough that only the attacker could hear him.

"Ah…..well, it doesn't matter even if you aren't…."

Adabashi shook his head and let out a strange laughter.

"If someone unrelated died because of her, the gentle Ruri-chan will definitely feel sad."

- I totally don't get what this guy is saying! Is he high on drugs?
- But, right now the situation is really bad!

The man gradually increased the strength of his leg.

- Shit, I knew it… shouldn't have gotten involved in the turbid waters of blue squares affairs.
- Why did I come out…… and help them….

Really, he knew the reason.

Because if he didn't save them, he wouldn't be able to face Mikado, Anri and Saki. Though he never made any promises to anyone, his dignity would never allow him to display such cowardly behaviour.

- I'm really such an idiot….. this is just like with Shizuo…. I'm a suicide applicant….

Kida felt gastric juice coming out of his mouth, at that moment, a crackling sound could be heard from the attacker's back.

"?"

"?"

Both Kida and the attacker were confused by the sound, and stayed still –

But after a few seconds, the man's body ignited with blue-white flames, these strange colours lit up the dim laneway.

"Aaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhh!!"

The flames crackling leapt up to his ear, the blue colour gradually changed to yellow and red.

The attacker simultaneously ran away while frantically taking off his clothing –

Eventually, his form disappeared from sight.

Of course, Kida had no energy to chase after him, he could only sigh in relief that he was still alive while also wondering what just happened.

- !
- This guy……

He finally saw, it was the boy wearing the ski mask and goggles crawling along the asphalt road. His goggles were cracked, so he must not be able to see in front clearly.

By his side was an oil cistern and in his hand was a Zippo cigarrete lighter.

- This guy….
- Did he burn that man without any hesitation…..?

Though it was considered self-defense, but to pour gasoline on someone and light them on fire, requires a strong psyche. From the people Kida knew, there was only one that dared to do this – but even putting aside that he's an otaku, that guy can't be considered normal.

- I don't think, after all, Yamasaki has Kadota to watch over him….
- Is it these loose kind of guys trying to use Mikado….

"You're Kunamura Aoba!"

Kida stared at the body crawling on the floor, and grabbed his collar.

"For now, until I confirm Anri is safe, please come along with me. If you guys are protecting Anri, I'll express my gratitude, but if you're trying to attempt something by using Mikado, then prepare for some retribution."

Kida said this with a sharp look and a threatening expression.

However, hearing the words, the boy wearing the ski mask slowly lifted his head.

The boy's face had an expression of disbelief, as if he was looking at a desert mirage.

"?"

Kida was confused about the other's reaction.

He was too ignorant about the 'situation'.

From how the blue square members acted, Kida judged that this boy was Kunamura Aoba – but he didn't know.

Blue square members don't use polite speech towards Kunamura Aoba.

Kida didn't know.

He just didn't know.

This boy with the ski mask isn't Kunamura Aoba.

So far there was only one person that the members of blue squares spoke respectably to –

And this 'one person' looked at Kida and said one word.

"----------Masaomi?"

This was the voice Kida Masaomi wanted to hear the most –

And the voice he least wanted to hear from under the ski mask.

- Ah…….
- Mika……..do……?

This was an unexpected sound.

Kida wished he heard wrongly, but –

The boy being held by the collar by a startled Kida slowly took off his mask and goggles – to reveal a bloody face.

"Masaomi…..? This isn't a dream….. right?"

"Mikado…..? This isn't real….. right?"

Kida released his hand, and kneeled on the ground.

He had to say something.

Though he thought his, the unexpected reunion had rendered Kida's mind empty.

"Why… are you here….. what do you want to do?"

Kida, word by word, slowly voiced the question in his heart.

Mikado used a handkerchief to wipe his face, and occasionally groaned 'ouch!' instinctively. His nose and cheekbone, perhaps both, were broken.

"Hey…. Are you alright? The hospital….. right, I'll call the ambulance….."

Kida muttered hurriedly, at that moment, he heard the sound of a car approaching from a distance.

A van stopped on the roadside, a boy wearing a bandana came out from the back seat and ran to Mikado's side.

"Mikado-senpai! You're alright!"

Then, several other boys also came out of the car, and ran to check the conditions of the other blue square companions.

"Yes…… it's not too bad. But, the others were beaten really badly….."

"Looking at the condition of your face, Mikado-senpai you're also injured pretty badly…. this is?"

Perhaps he didn't feel any hostility from Kida, the boy didn't treat him as an 'enemy', only asked Mikado suspiciously.

"……..Masaomi….. Kida Masaomi……. He's my close friend."

On hearing the name, the boy narrowed his eyes.

“Ah, you are……”

The boys voice contained a lot of emotion. However, Kida didn’t miss the brief smile that appeared on his face.

Only, that kind of detail wasn’t important right now, facing Mikado who was holding Aoba’s shoulder to stand, Kida said.

“Hey…… Mikado….?”

Mikado headed towards the van –

Then, he turned his head, and said somewhat sadly.

“I’m sorry, Masaomi, please keep waiting.”

“Huh?”

Though his expression was sad, he didn’t feel sad, the expression was like when an elementary student forgot to return a borrowed game software.

“Waiting? .....What are you talking about?”

He had to say something.

Though he knew this in his heart, Kida had no idea what to say.

Looking at Kida’s confused face, Mikado smiled.

The same as before, smile.

The same as when they were in elementary school, smile.

The same as when he asked ‘Is it Kida?’ when they first met in Ikebukuro, smile.

He smiled. Smile. Smile.

It was the same smiling face as the old Mikado.

Because of this, looking at his smiling face, Kida froze, and could not utter a word.

- Are you…..
- Really Mikado?

A boy with his face dripping blood, and bones broken in several places can show his usual smiling face. This kind of smiling face, absolutely free of any evil intention, made Kida's body break out in cold sweat.

On a roof top where a typhoon is blowing on your house, wearing a raincoat, his face is wearing his usual smiling face.

From Mikado's smiling face, Kida received this kind of strange image.

Wearing his usual smiling expression, Mikado said to the silent Kida.

"It's nearly there."

"Huh?"

"It's nearly created…. a safe place for Masaomi and Sonohara-san."

Kida felt his own back make a cracking sound.

An alarming ice-cold shiver crawled from his feet up his entire body.

But, he decided that he had to say something so he approached Mikado.

"Hey….. Mikado…..?"

However, Mikado didn't stop walking, only softly spoke with his back still turned.

"So….. until it's created, please wait patiently, I'll definitely…. help Sonohara-san and Masaomi. So, before that…. I think it's better if we don't meet."

These were the concluding words.

Kida wasn't able to say anything, he just stood there in the same position.

"What about the stalkers?"

"One was punched till his eyes were inflamed, then escaped, another I think is the guy that attacked Mikado-senpai, he escaped by car. Overall, right now Sonohara-senpai is safe."

"Really…. that's good then."

After they got on the van, Mikado leaned his head out the window, and said to the pensive and dull standing Kida.

"Sorry, Masaomi, I have a….. no, two requests."

"Requests? ….What is it? Don't talk to me like a stranger! Whatever you want to say, sat it!"

- Say it.
- The situation right now, is this what you want?
- So, just say 'please help me', say it!

Mikado still wearing his usual smile said.

“Afterwards, I’m going to meet with Sonohara-san.… what I’m doing, please keep it a secret from Sonohara-san. The fact that I’ve been here and that I wanted to help her.”

“Huh……?”

“Also, the other request is…. please return that cat to Sonohara-san.”

“Meow~”

A friendly kitten was rubbing against Kida’s feet, as if saying ‘play with me!’.

Kida didn’t know how long he stood there.

In fact, Mikado and the van just left, not even one minute had passed, but to Kida it felt like several hours had passed, just like being in a deep sleep for several days with a sense of being lost and lonely.

The van carrying Mikado and them vanished from his sight – Kida noticed Anri coming out from a hiding place.

“……..Anri.”

Anri, wearing glasses, saw the soft-spoken Kida, and off-handedly came over.

“Kida-kun…..? …..How come….. you’re here!?”

A reunion after over 6 months causes Anri to give a startled yell.

Kida’s mind thought fuzzily that ‘Anri just yelled, this is the first time I’ve seen that’. Then, he answered her question.

“Ah…. this is…. I incidentally passed by….”

Although his excuse was far from credible, Anri didn’t care.

She laughed and asked.

“Kida-kun…. Since then, why did you…..”

Not finishing her sentence, Dokusonmaru sitting beside Kida’s feet cried out.

“Meow.”

“! Dokusonmaru…. Kida-kun, did you save the cat?”

Though the injuries she obtained from before caused her not to see too well, looking at the scars from abdomen to shoe, she knew he couldn’t have possibly just ‘incidentally passed by and found the cat’.

Before inquiring about his condition, Anri resolved to express her gratitude first, but –

“Thank…….”

“Sorry, Anri!”

“Eh?”

Her words were interrupted by Kida, her eyes widened in surprise.

“Next time I’ll definitely explain the situation to you! So, please…… please keep waiting.”

By Kida’s firm expression, the sense of being lost and lonely wielded.

Seeing Anri’s face full of doubt, Kida wants to say.

- Back then my expression and Anri's is exactly the same.
- Sorry, I'm truly sorry, Anri.
- But, the me right now….. doesn't have the right to talk to you.

Though he believed he didn't have the right to talk with a friend, his dignity prevented his desire. However, he still thinks his judgement isn't wrong and said to Anri seriously.

"I'll definitely come back to you guys. Until then, I'm…. sorry!"

After saying this, Kida turned his back on Anri and ran off into the night.

"Ah…. Kida-kun….? Kida…..!?"

Anri wanted to chase after him, but anchored her footsteps through her will.

Because, staring at the sword she was holding, Saika—

Her heart was intensely singing the 'love sound'.

- 'Cut!' 'Cut!' 'Cut!'
- 'Love!' 'Love!' 'Love!'
- 'That child, and Mikado, don't you like them!'
- 'So, let them both be—'

"……!"

Anri used her will to shake her head, and forced Saika that had unexpectedly come out back into her body.

- No.
- It's not like that…..

Anri looks at the world through passing scenery in picture frames, in one frame is her 'deep place' where she safeguards her innermost feelings.

But – Mikado and Kida – entered an outside frame.

Because of this, the young girl was feeling restless.

She can't watch them without an objective.

She only hopes that at the time both their world's are together again, Saika's evil clutches won't reach them.

Anri listens respectfully to Saika's voice, but because she listens to the voice, she feels afraid.

If she falls in love with someone – she will completely become a part of Saika, and injure that important person.

Because, thinking of herself as a parasite, losing a host is very fearful.

Dokusonmaru imitates Anri who's worrying and fidgeting restlessly –

Rubbing next to her foot, he cried out to her.

※※※※※

Somewhere in Ikebukuro, in a Van

“Aoba, I have a request.”

“What is it?”

Mikado shrugged his shoulders and quietly asked his kohai.

“I’m thinking, I should temporarily leave my house, and stay at a manga cafe type place for a while. If thats the case, the contact method also has to change. After, we’ll just meet at those places.”

“Leave your house? Why?”

“…..Because, Masaomi might come over to my house, before Dollar’s ‘reorganistion’ is finished, I think it’s better if I don’t meet up with him……”

Mikado looked out the window, and wearing his usual smile though mixed with a bit of loneliness, he said.

“If it’s possible, I hope Masaomi and Sonohara-san don’t get involved…… because, this is a problem that only Dollars members have to resolve.”

“At the time when Sonohara-san invites Kida, Dollars has to be even more……”

Without finishing his words, Mikado calmly lowered his head and smiled.

Not knowing if this kind of smile is from recollections of times he spent with Kida and Anri in the past or if he’s thinking about the future, or perhaps, both.

“…….”

Aoba felt some madness from Mikado’s smile, he also closed his eyes without speaking.

Thought about being close to his desired future – and tranquilly smiled.

But, his smile was opposite that of Mikado’s, his smile was full of malice.

※※※※※

Somewhere in Ikebukuro

In a park near Ikebukuro station, a specific classroom in Raira Academy could clearly be seen.

Kida is leaning on a tree by the roadside, deep in thought.

It was late in the night, on this deserted strip of road, Kida took out his phone and prepared to give Saki a call.

After telling her that he’ll be home a little later in the day, he starts dialling another number.

“……Hello, is this Yatabe?”

“!? Shogun?”

The male called Yatabe simultaneously called out in pleasant surprise on the other end of the phone.

“I told you before not to call me shogun anymore…..”

Kida smiled bitterly and continued to talk.

“Listen….. right now I’m in Ikebukuro, ……it’s rare, so can we meet? If you can, can you also call the other guys…..”

“The other guys….. you mean the initial members of yellow turbans?”

“Yeah, I want to tell you guy’s something…. Or I should say, talk together with you guys again, of course I’m prepared to get beaten up by all of you…… also I don’t know how to say this, I want you guys to do something for me.”

“Talking so strange, Shogun’s wilfulness, we’re already used to it! Also, we know, that guy called Horada, before he got arrested, Shogun taught him a lesson.”

Listening to the voice of his past companion, Kida couldn’t help but break out into a smile.

A half-year before, he once resolved that he wouldn’t collaborate with this companion anymore.

At that time, he even avoided speaking to him as much as possible, but now, for some reason it seemed more natural to speak with him compared to the past.

- Say, Mikado.
- If you’ve fallen into that world…..
- I will definitely save you.

It doesn’t matter how, even if I have to forcefully drag you back, until a moment ago, this was what Kida thought.

But, after he actually met with Mikado, he felt keenly his own naivety.

Mikado wasn’t playing a game to control Dollars, and he wasn’t just a chess piece for Aoba. Moreover, forget about using force, it’s impossible to drag him back.

Mikado had not sought for Kida’s help, Kida himself decided to rescue Mikado. Kida understood clearly, right now his heart was the same as Mikado’s, forcefully pushing their good intentions onto others.

However, although he realizes this, Kida is not changing his resolve.

- It doesn’t matter if I decided it all on my own, I’m still going to save you, even if you cry and shout that it isn’t what you want.
- You should know already? I’m the type of guy that can’t be helped.

※※※※※

Kida and Mikado, Anri and Kida. Though in that moment each one had a reunion, that doesn’t mean that these three people will reunite again. Each of the three held their own ideals and a restlessness that has become a chasm between them.

In the city of Ikebukuro, the seed of instability is growing –

A young girl is still unable to find a home to return to.

『表＝裏＝狭間 臨也前旅 @Möbusloop』
&ネクストプロローグ

# Epilogue & Next Prologue
# Inside = Outside = Between “Izaya Returns in Triumph @ Möbiusloop”

Chatroom

Private message: Saika [Really, thank you so much.]

Private message: Gaki [No problem, don’t worry about it.]

Private message: Gaki [Ah, though I didn’t think that you would be the first to private message me.]

Private message: Saika [Excuse me. Sorry for the inconvenience.]

Private message: Gaki [Stop apologizing (laugh).]

Private message: Gaki [Speaking of which, I have something I wanted to ask.]

Private message: Saika [What is it?]

Private message: Gaki [Anri’s nickname, how should it read?]

Private message: Saika [SAIKA.]

Private message: Gaki [What does it mean?]

Private message: Saika [This, ah, was a name from a fairy tale that my mother told me as a child.]

Private message: Gaki [Ah ah, I see…. Did I make you remember bad things?]

Private message: Saika [No, don’t worry.]

Private message: Gaki [Ah, sorry, my colleague is calling me, I’ll leave first.]

Private message: Saika [Sorry for bothering you.]

Gaki [I was in a private chat with Saika for a while.]

Gaki [The others haven’t seem to come, then I’ll just say goodbye first.]

------ Gaki has left the chatroom ------

※※※※※

Somewhere in Awakusu-kai, main headquarters

“Akabayashi, you alright?”

“Yes, I just finished….”

On hearing Shiki’s voice, Akabayashi put away his cell phone.

“Is there some business?”

“Ah, not really. Speaking of which, Shiki, what are you here for?”

Akabayashi replied back to Awakusu-kai's executive, Shiki, very carelessly.

Akabayashi appears happily relaxed slouching on the sofa, while tapping his cane rhythmically on the ground. Shiki, on the other hand, looks serious and says.

"Do you understand a lot about Dollars?"

"No, I know about as much as you do."

A few days prior –

During a meeting, someone suddenly brought up the subject of Dollars.

They were told Dollars is an organization formed in an online network, and is being exploited for the trading of illicit drugs. Sometimes even challenging Awakusu-kai territory.

Someone even asked what the purpose of Dollars was –

"The matter of Dollars, give it to me to settle."

Akabayashi volunteered.

"Have they made any suspicious movements lately?"

Answering Shiki's question, Akabayashi monotonously replied.

"I think they're doing some sort of internal cleansing, I let the people in 'Jan jan jan' investigate, Dollars are kicking out the members involved in illegal businesses. Recently the focus has been centred on Hijiribe Ruri's stalker."

"Ah…… Kazamoto had bad luck on that, his own staff were accused of being the stalker, and pictures of them have been distributed online."

"That's right, you can even find pictures of them on sites that have nothing to do with Dollars, hilarious."

"It's not that funny."

Shiki lit up a cigarette while mumbling this to himself, Akabayashi simply shrugged his shoulders.

"Yeah, as things stand, it's not so good…. but really, I don't think Dollars is going to pose a problem."

After this statement, he continued saying.

"Though, it does seem that their internal cleansing movement is a bit rushed, I just hope it doesn't become some sort of strange cult.

In response to Akabayashi's explanation, Shiki drawled.

"Yes, though whatever happens. If a problem arises….. it's up to you to solve it, Akabayashi."

"Shiki-san, you also have to take care yourself."

"?"

Shiki furrowed his brows, Akabayashi continued talking.

"That young informant, isn't he under your territory?"

"……."

Shiki was silent, Akabayashi recalled a conversation that happened a few hours ago.

A messenger from 'Jan jan jan' with a wristband shaped like a snake came to them.

While touching his wristband, he reported their findings to Akabayashi.

- From their observation of Ryuugamine Mikado, it seems he was the one that started the internal cleansing movement. There is another organization called the blue squares that is actively involved.

Using some subordinate's at the police station, they managed to collect some information concerning the Dollars leader after interrogating a man called Horoda. At first, Akabayashi simply thought that Dollars was an organization formed by a high school boy and that meetings only occurred online. He would never have thought that the leader would join up with the remaining members of Blue Squares in order to start an internal cleansing. Akabayashi has to start taking this Dollars leader more seriously.

- Also, though this may be of no importance.
- During our investigation of the Dollars leader, members of 'Dragon Zombie' that haven't appeared recently were seen.
- Those guys are also spying on Dollars.
- Though we don't know if they have any connection to each other…..
- We have someone in Ikebukuro that have spotted Izaya's whereabouts…. It seems that guy is planning something.
- There's a rumour that he's also a Dollars member, we have no information whether the two have any connection.

Overall, though Dollars was not doing anything abnormal in itself, there are so many different circumstances and events surrounding it, that Akabayashi has to keep a close eye on both Dollars and Ryuugamine Mikado.

Another piece of information that is duly noted -

- The young female student with glasses that you've previously taken care of….
- Though she and Ryuugamine Mikado are not lovers…. they are quite close. We have observed that they often walk to and from school together.

This, to Akabayashi, was a very personal problem.

Sonohara Anri is the daughter of his first love, she's like a sister to him, albeit one very young.

If she is involved with the leader of Dollars, then this goes beyond the boundaries of his work, it's become his personal problem.

If it were someone who did not have Akabayashi's kind of character, this would not pose as such a big problem.

"……..Now that I look at it, the surface of Ikebukuro is not that peaceful."

Barely catching Akabayashi's soft self-spoken words, Shiki asked from the side.

"What did you say?"

"No, just a personal problem. Speaking of which, is there really no problem with that informant? I heard there was a time no one knew where he went, now he just appeared again?"

"…..Yes, you probably already know. In fact…. we already have someone spying on him, though Aozaki-san is against it."

"His disagreement is understandable. Aozaki-san has always thought that 'lock' shouldn't move about freely."

"I'm simply doing my job….. but, I'm also against letting it move freely.

※※※※※

Nerima somewhere, Nebula Medical Research Facility

When Kishitani Shinra once again recovered his consiousness, he realized he was laying on a bed in the research institute his father, Shingen and his step-mother, Emilia, belonged to. It's already been more than 12 hours since he was taken here, during that time, most of the dangerous incidents have already past.

At the time he awoke, his conciousness was still a bit fuzzy, the people around him also seemed not to have noticed the fact that he was awake.

- What's going on?

Though his head was gradually becoming more coherent, his body couldn't move, and it seemed he was entirely wrapped with a restrictive blanket.

But after his head managed to almost completely recover, Shinra started to understand his situation and the reason behind it.

- Ah, that's right. I was beaten up by a strange man.
- I went through a violent attack.
- Huh? What?
- How come I can feel something soft on my body?
- Heavy but soft….. like 2 mountains….
- Could, could it be…… Celty?!

At this point, Shinra's consiousness was fully alert, and like his life depended on it he forced open his eyes.

A wave of pain spread throughout his body, but still he resisted the overwhelming feeling and managed to open his eyes – the vision he was met with was of a white gas mask.

"How disappointing! Filled with all that anticipation and it turned out like this?"

Shinra, in his despair, yelled this out loud.

But because his lungs inhaled too much too quickly from the excitement, and air rushed through his trachea, he started coughing painfully.

His body shook from the motion, rocking the body with the gas mask lying on top of him.

- Huh?
- How come the mask's position is so strange, isn't this father?

When he could finally see more clearly, the white mask person wasn't his father –

But was the wife of Shingen's second marriage, Kishitani Emilia.

From the way the mask fell down her face in the direction of Shinra, he could tell she was still soundly asleep.

Apparently, while taking care of him she had fallen asleep directly on top of him.

- So it was Emilia.
- No wonder the feeling of her breasts felt much larger than Celty's.
- But, my ribs are broken, pressing on my body like that…. really hurts.

If it were any other typical male, and they were pressed up against Emilia's soft breasts, they would definitely become excited, but for Shinra, not only is she his step-mother, he's also only interested in Celty. Therefore his face was neither red, or his feelings stirred.

Then, he nudged Emilia awake.

"Stepmother, get up get up! Where's Celty?"

"....Ahhh, Shingen, I won. I got the three great scholars, now take off your clothes." (3 great scholars, something to do with Mahjong.)

"What kind of dream are you having! ..…Aiya, it hurts, it hurts ouchouchouchouchouchouchouchouch!"

The anesthetics seem to have faded, right now Shinra could feel every inch of his body in burning pain.

Only at this moment when he gave up trying to wake Emilia—

The room's door suddenly slammed opened, in one second, Celty flew into the room.

"Oh, Celty, it's not what it looks like, when I woke up Emilia was already like this!"

Shinra tried to quickly clear the situation to Celty, believing that since she's the type that liked getting jealous, it wouldn't be strange if she grabbed a knife and started stabbing him –

But Celty continues to make a beeline towards him, and throws herself above Emilia to encircle Shinra's head into her arms.

"Oh?!"

In response to this over-emotional action, Shinra's body experienced severe pain.

But even so, Shinra's face was filled with a happy expression, though along with that his low blood pressure also elavated.

"Just then, hearing Shinra's voice.... thank goodness.... really, really, thank goodness!"

Celty handed shinra her PDA to read, while continuously stroking his cheek.

It seems she isn't even aware of Emilia's existence, she was completly immersed in her joy for Shinra's regained conciousness.

"I was so worried! Terrified that you'd really die.... if that happened, I might have just abandoned searching for my own head and bring your head back to my hometown instead...."

"….Though I don't know if what your saying is true or not, Celty, but hearing that is truly terrifying."

Though shinra was smiling with tears, in his heart, he actually felt very happy.

In spite of the feeling that all the bones in his body were going to fall apart, Shinra opened his arms for Celty to rest on his chest while he held her.

However, because of all this tossing about, his hospitilastion time was extended another 5 days.

After everyone agreed that Shinra's condition was stable, Shinra asked.

"In the end, how did the stalker situation go?"

"I'm also not sure, but it's said that several people surrendered, there were also some that were beaten up by Shizuo and arrested by the police, and then clues were followed up to capture a lot of suspects."

So the stalker wasn't only one person, this fact was suprising enough – but the one thing Celty is most agitated by is that the principal offender, Adabashi still hasn't been captured.

“Also, that guy is the one that attacked you, the prime culprit who caused you all this suffering...”

Though these words were only written on the pda and she showed no expression, Shinra still thought that something inside her changed, and unable to help worrying he asked.

“Celty?”

“What?”

“Don’t become a murderer because of some unnnecessary reasons.”

- You almost died, how could you say it’s an unnecessary reason!

Though, inside celty, these thoughts were boiling, but aware of Shinra’s reasoning, she calmly typed on her PDA.

“Don’t worry, I only want him to be found, I dont want to kill him.”

Then slowly Celty stood up, and continued typing on her PDA.

“Only I can’t guarantee that I can control my temper enough to hand him over to the police without a few wounds.”

Though this didn’t turn out into that serious a situation.

It was in this incident that Celty’s unexpected ‘weakness’ was discovered.

Whether she was shot by a gun, or stabbed with multple knives, or even chased by police officers, her heart had never wavered so badly, this kind of Celty –

In facing the scene of Shinra’s attack, her suffering was exposed to the people surrounding her that had never thought she had a ‘weakness’. In fact, till Shinra was dropped off at this place, in the time during his unconsciousness, Celty felt she couldn’t do anything at all, not even form her common sickle from her shadow.

Shingen, who could immediatly see this, said a few words ‘your love for Shinra is different from the love human’s feel. Instead, your love compared to that of humans is much more pure.”

He then turned around to leave after checking Shinra’s condition once more. But Celty kept thinking about the matter of her own ‘weakness’, and also thought a change had occurred in her.

- The first time.
- …..From the bottom of my heart ….the feeling of wanting to kill…..
- But, it’s unforgivable, the one who’s weak is me.

Celty felt such despair and remorse over not being able to protect Shinra. This incident has left a knot in her heart that couldn’t be untied. Harbouring these kind of feelings, she left Nebula’s medical research facility.

- Though Shinra said those words….
- But if Adabashi appeared before me right now… will I really be able to hold myself back….
- Would I really severe his body in half using my shadow sickle?
- …….I can’t ….I don’t even have the confidence to control myself…

Celty distresses over this while running alond the evening’s street.

And had not even realized, the fact that she herself has been followed for some time.

※※※※※

Ikebukuro, a conversation taking place in the back of a high-class car.

“How is it, Yagiri?”

An old man with the appearance of a gentle grandfather smiled while saying this.

Sitting in the back of the high-class car, the old man asked this question to another man sitting beside him, Yagiri Seitarou.

“So it’s like that, it’s truly gone beyond my imagination. If you look at this from a 3rd person perspective, it really seems as if this were by a monster only indulging in it’s own impulse.”

“From my perspective, better watch for Hijiribe Ruri. Overall, the result obtained from the stalker situation certainly gives one a headache.”

Though his expression was filled with mercy, how much of it is real sincerity.

Seitarou looked out of the car window and spotted Celty dashing down the road, then turned his head back to the moniter in the vehicle that’s been following Celty these past few days, he couldn’t help letting out a big sigh and saying.

“Really, I’m interested in Hijiribe Ruri’s ‘abnormality’…. however, my curiosity is more aroused by the headless rider.”

“Ah ah.”

“I really want to obtain it.”

“You, who already has her head, now want’s to obtain her body?”

Yodogiri asked with a smile, and Seitarou gently answered.

“I want it all.”

“Huh?”

“Not only the headless rider’s body, also the young girl with the monster’s sword, and Hijiribe Ruri, as well as the headless rider’s head that my niece stole away… I want all of them, that’s what I mean.”

Seitarou gently moved his neck back and forth, staring at the moniter where Celty’s form once again appears, with eyes sparkiling like a kid’s he mumbled to himself.

“Though it seems the body has given up searching for it’s own head…. but I still want to thoroughly analyse both body parts. Of course, I must guarantee my own safety first.”

“….Could this be your hidden ideology?”

After watching Yodogiri laugh for a while, Seitarou coldly said.

“You should know when to stop a boring joke. All you have to do is answer whether or not you’ll help me with the provisions, yes or no.”

“I will contribue, of course, whether it’s the headless rider or the monster sword, once they find out the instigation of the stalkers was by me, they will definitely come looking for me.”

“You’re thinking about making yourself bait? You really are shameless.”

After hearing Seitarou’s words, Yodogiri began laughing again and answered.

“You can’t become a tiger if you don’t enter the tiger’s den, this teaches kids not to belay the wolf. When they obtain my name from wherever Adabashi is, they will definitely come here to me. Then all you have to do is wait until they find me, and it’s time to let them experience the way we do things.”

Though the speech was filled with self-confidence, Yodogiri appeared somewhat embarrassed and scratched the back of his head.

“Although ever since this evening we’ve somehow lost track of Adabashi’s location, it seems the plan has gone a bit outside of our expectation.”

“……..…”

“Forget it, you don’t need to worry about these small details… After all, he’s still young, after making a mistake he still has the opportunity to start with a clean slate. Hahahahahahahha.”

Seitarou couldn’t grasp clearly which words the other spouted were real or fake, so he continued to stare helplessly at the expression of the other sitting by his side –

Then suddenly, as if he just thought of something, he asked.

“I just realized your mannerism compared to the time when you were on TV is different, is it possible you tidied up?”

“Oh, yes….. because I kept being chased around by Awakusu-kai and the police, if I hadn’t tidied up I would have been dead years ago. Hahahaha.”

Seitarou eyed the man with a pitiful expression, he never realized himself.

But it wasn’t just him that never realised.

The person who once requested Vorona and them to kidnap Awakusu Akane compared to the person talking endlessly next to him, from appearance to sound, are completely different.

In more detail – if Seitarou had overheard a phone conversation between Yodogiri and Adabashi a few days prior – then he would definitely realize that that voice and the voice of the man sitting next to him now was completly different.

Seitarou, who knew nothing about this matter, treated the man beside him with no cautiousness, he recalls some words once said to him by a friend who constantly wears a gas mask.

About one day ago –

A phone call to Seitarou after his son was injured.

- So it’s really started?
- You’re still as keen as you were in the past, but this time I’m not just going to sit back and do nothing.
- Really, the way you start something and not even try to prevent the consequences is still exactly the same. Right now my son’s life is in a critical condition, for you, my friend, I wish to do only one thing… and that is to punch you in the face!
- Okay, the next time we meet, I’ll let you get in one punch. But after that, you can longer simply do whatever you please anymore.

It was after that phone call, the two people did not contact again.

But Seitarou knew Shingen wasn’t the type of person to give up so easily. However, even so, he still wanted to satisfy his own desire, that’s why he’s with Yodogiri now continuing with this crude transition.

Therefore compared to the man sitting beside him now, Seitarou was far more concerned about Shingen's movements.

A happy expression reappeared on Seitarou's face when he thought aloud.

"That guy is the type that won't stop until his goal is reached, what kind of action will he make…."

※※※※※

One day ago, Happy Shade Clubhouse

In fact, after a phone call with his friend, Shingen's response was very quick.

The counter-action was decided a long time ago, after the phone call with Seitarou finished Shingen immediately rushed here –

Below the gas mask, his voice was filled with self-confidence.

"Because of a particular reason, I need to punch my long time friend, but honestly speaking I have never fought before in my life, therefore I'd like for you to quickly teach me a simple and easy boxing technique to kill."

"Get out!"

In front of the white gas mask man, who had suddenly rushed into the boxing room, Sharaku Eijirou shouted in reply.

However, Shingen is not the type that easily gives up, taking out his wallet from his chest pocket, he starts speaking in a conversing manner.

"If you want money, I have it! Whatever amount, I have! If you don't believe me, just say a price and I'm willing to pull it out."

"I'm not willing, you're saying all you want is to learn a punch that can kill? Alright, that's enough, you should really get out."

"Dammit… I'm telling you, I'm a man that won't stop till my goal is reached…."

"……What are you going to do?"

Eijirou asked with a serious expression on his face, in response to his Shingen moved closer towards him and whispered.

"All you have to do is wear this gas mask, and clothing similar to this, then use your sandbag fist to punch a guy by the name of Seitarou really hard! How about it? A perfect plan, isn't it? I'll give you a reward, of course. 100,000 yen in advance!"

"…...Yeah, that does sound pretty good….. Ouch!?"

It was at this time as Eijirou was actually contemplating the proposition, when his head suffered a forceful handchop.

"What kind of nonsense are you spouting, I'm going out, the rest is left to you, big brother."

A very spirited young woman flung these words at Eijirou, before turning around and heading out the door.

"Oi, Mikage! Can't you treat your brother with a little more respect… Damn, then what about lunch?"

"Eat out!"

From her spiky short hair and solid physique, as well as her obvious muscular abdominals and her non-obvious breasts, it wouldn't be strange to mistake the young woman as a young male.

After his yonger sister left, Eijirou let out a big sigh.

“Seriously, recently that girl always goes out early and comes home late, maybe she found a boyfriend. Why am I telling you this, we only just met.”

“Yes… though I don’t know what the matter is about, but can I ask you for a favour?”

“What is it?”

From the serious expression the man showed while proposing the request, Eijirou couldn’t help asking anxiously out of curiosity.

“A moment ago, I said to disguise your appearance as me, but can that young woman just then do it instead? Though she’s a woman, but after she wears something on top, nobody could tell. With her in my disguise and beating people up gives me a bit of a perverted and excited feeling…. So how about it?”

“Get out!”

“Wait! In fact, my son was injured and is in the hospital, if he were to think that his father went to visit him but instead it turned out to be a young woman, he would definitely be pleasantly surprised, it might even help in his recovery process. Then please help me with this…..”

“Hurry up and Get Out!

※※※※※

Soon after the boxing room farce, Ikebukuro –

Adabashi, who suffered burns from his back to the side of his ear, finally managed to drag his exhausted body back to his apartment building.

After parking his car at the parking lot, while suppressing the pain in his body, he walked towards the apartment entrance.

Right now, Adabashi is filled with resentment.

But his resentment is not caused by the pain, but because unknown people hindered his love towards Hijiribe Ruri.

Actually, one of the reasons is due to the TV currently airing a press conference involving Hijiribe Ruri’s entertainment company.

Because this means that after all this, before Adabashi can send Ruri’s ‘photos’. Channel 8 news each flash news media may show these pictures on TV.

“There are new photos of Hijiribe Ruri online, it seems like it’s some kind of adult movie, rumour has it that the president was infected with a virus in his computer and that’s how the pictures leaked!”

These kinds of news spread online, as well as the shocking photos, it turns out the photos were from a private manufacture of a horror movie scene.

- Damn….. what is that!
- These fucking people…. hindering the love between Ruri and me.

Resentment and discontent piled up inside him, until it gradually progressed to the point where the feeling of ‘destroy everything in my path in order to vent my anger’ was at its peak.

And at that moment, in front of Adabashi – standing in front of the apartment entrance, a man appeared.

On first glance the man was young, but while standing on the staircases with its bad lighting, his appearance couldn’t be seen clearly.

"……"

Though Adabashi felt the need to vent out his frustations urgently, even he knew that doing questionable actions outside his own apartment is a bad idea.

He forcefully restrained the rising excitement and walks past the man.

However – the man takes Adabashi by suprise by saying.

"Hey, what's up with you, your whole back up to your head is burnt, and it's quite smelly!"

"……?"

"That burn, was it by engine oil or created by alcohol or something? When it starts you really don't feel it's hot, but once it burns through your clothes, then you're in trouble.... speaking of which, who did it? Don't tell me it was someone's idea of a practical joke? Aiya... thats so funny hahahahahahaha."

The man inexplicably clapped his hands while laughing.

Adabashi furrowed his eyebrows and quickly changed his mind.

- I'll kill him.

Suppressing the pain in his back, Adabashi lifted his foot without hesitation to kick at the man –

At this moment, along with a clear sound, Adabashi's leg moved in a strange direction and then bent unnaturally.

"!? Aghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!"

The man was holding a flinty hammer in his right hand - in the moment that Adabashi raised his leg, the hammer was slammed down onto it.

Adabashi fell to the ground and couldn't help crying out in pain, the man's face once again let out an absent-minded smile.

It was the same smiling face that appeared on Adabashi's face when he set up the pictures of Hijiribe Ruri.

While Adabashi groaned aloud from the pain, he tried to see the man's facial features from under the dim streetlights.

At a glance, the man seemed less than 20 years of age –

The right half of his face all the way down to his right hand was completely covered in scars of a past burn, the kind of guy who would make a deep impression on anyone.

"I'll kill…… you….."

Adabashi groaned out and tried to force himself to stand up –

But a heavy force suddenly made contact with the back of his head, causing his consiousness to vanish instantly into a boundless darkness.

Once again, coming from the entrance of the peaceful looking apartment, a young woman said.

"What the hell are you doing, are you going to nurse him back to health when we get back?"

It was a young woman with spiky short hair and a short temper to rival any males – Sharaku Mikage, who said this to the hammer male. It was her who used her leg to kick the back of Adabashi's head, who now layed unconscious at her feet.

“Don’t nag me…. I don’t remember anyone telling me I need to follow your orders…. Haha, Hahahahahahahahahahhahahahahahahahahahahahahaha.”

Though he himself didn’t know what he found so funny, but the male couldn’t stop laughing uncontrollably.

Behind him appeared many men on mortorbikes, they rode up to the middle of the parking lot where Adabashi was lying and lifted him up onto the vehicle. Then left as if nothing had happened.

“Alright, we should go too.”

After urging the laughing male slightly, Mikage and the male also left.

The only thing remaining at the entrance of the apartment was a slight stain of Adabashi’s blood.

※※※※※

Chatroom

Sharo [In the end, in order to drive away that gas mask uncle, I wasted half an hour.]

Chrome [How scary.]

Saki [The white gas mask man is quite formidable.]

Kanra [Does this kind of guy really exist? Shoro, are you just trying to trick us?]

Sharo [No, it’s real.]

Mai [I want to see it myself.]

Mai [While you hold him down, practice will go well.]

Kyo [This is just like a fairytale in Ikebukuro nowadays. This oddity can co-exist with the black headless rider! A strange gas mask man! His real form is probably toxic gas! Once the gas mask is taken off, poisonous gas will come oozing out to pollute the surrounding area.]

Kanra [Too scary!]

Chrome [Speaking of which, there was a movie called ‘Toxic man number 1’.]

Kanra [Huh? Chrome likes to watch movies?]

Chrome [Yeah, you could say that.]

Sharo [Toxic man is such an old movie…..]

Kanra [Then, after this recommend some good movies for me, please.]

Chrome [No problem.]

※※※※※

Ikebukuro somewhere, top floor of a high-rise apartment.

Yagiri Namie is shocked by the scene in front of her.

Her entire body shivered, followed by a book she was holding falling to the ground.

She, who’s been known for her cold and calm demeanour during work, almost broke out into tears from looking at the scene.

The image in front of her was of a computer and a small laptop side by side on a tabletop.

As well as a man moving back and forth between the two, typing on both keyboards.

Both computer monitors display the same chatroom screen.

On one side, the chatroom ID is ‘Chrome’, while on the other its ‘Kanra’, looking at the image of the man having a conversation with himself online whilst humming a tune under his breath, Namie was filled with pity.

- Though I knew he doesn’t have any friends….
- But I had no idea it was to the point of conversing with himself….

In the moment she decided she’ll simply forget the entire scene and turned to leave.

The man who was conversing with himself using two computers – Orihara Izaya greeted Namie happily and said.

“Haha, this guy who has no friends is starting to do strange things by himself now, is that what you’re thinking, Namie.”

“It’s not strange, it’s pitiful.”

“Whatever you say. It’s possible to have multiple personalities online, though you only give people one impression there are a lot of different places to use this oppurtunity.....”

After exiting the chatroom with both ID’s, Orihaya Izaya closed the computers, then stood up and said.

“Also, it surprises me that you think I have no friends. I love every single person on this earth, therefore you could say I’m friends with every single person.”

“That’s a unilateral love, that kind of thinking is the same as a stalker’s.”

“Huh? Say what you want!”

Izaya shrugged his shoulders, Namie coldly asked.

“What’s your reason for renting such a large apartment in Ikebukuro? You’re not actually thinking about killing that man who wears the bartender’s uniform, are you?”

On hearing the name, Izaya’s face flashes a look of loathing, but the look passed quickly, Izaya then talked as if mumbling to himself.

“That’s right... the reason I came back, to make sure those worried teenagers won’t feel any security, that’s it.”

“What?”

“Security hinders the growth of humans. Take Shinra, no matter what kind of difficult situation he would get into, in the end Celty or Shizuo always came to rescue him, therefore he carried this sense of security, then when a truly dangerous situation arises and the normal strategy fails, it ends up like this, with a trip to the hospital. However, I’ve resolved to be more severe with my friends, because they’re my friends, so when I receive the phone call to tell me where Shinra’s hospital is, I’ve decided to say ‘I know’ and hang up the phone.”

“You say it’s severe, but it’s just you being a prick. Moreover, you’ve never received a call about Shinra’s wellbeing before.”

After the piercing comments from Namie, Izaya silently walks toward the table to sit down – then gazing at the surroundings in the room he continues to say.

“Of course, I consider all of the people in this room as my friend.”

The people in the room – consisted of a variety of existences.

A young lady was standing near a bookshelf with eyes filled with killing intent towards Izaya.

There were also several men wearing leather jackets with the words ‘Dragon Zombie’ inscribed on their back.

Also, a smiling girl with long black hair and glowing red eyes.

A huge man over 2 metres tall with his entire body covered in bandages.

A man lying unconscious on the ground, his thigh bone fractured.

A man wearing earphones, standing next to the door, with an appearance that would give anyone a sense of foreboding.

And many others, male and female, of different and unique looks all listening intently to Izaya.

Then, a male with a burn scar on his face laughingly said to Izaya.

“I don’t remembter ever becoming friends with you… I only want to fulfill my desires, to kill Yamasaki, Kadota and them, and kill Aoba, and kill Kida Masaomi, then if I can kill you in the end, Great, I’ll be happy!”

“Shut up, Izumii.”

Sharaku Mikage, standing beside him says this back to him somewhat awkwardly, but the male with the burn scars – Izumii Ren continues talking.

“That’s right,…… Yamazaki…. it was Yamazaki…. that bastard….. I’ll kill him…. and make his face like mine, burn it all till it melts…. haha…. hahahahahah…… hahahahahahahahahhahaha!”

After Izumii finished ranting to himself he suddenly gave out a loud shout, all the people surrounding were staring at him – Izaya smiled to Izumii and said.

“Ren-kun hasn’t changed at all, you still like to think up these impractical situations. Though, this is a speciality of humans, it’s so great.”

Then, he paused slightly, opened his arms to the room and said to all the occupants.

“Everyone, welcome to Dollars. Dollars will treat everyone of you equally.”

After that, Izaya turns to the window and filled with emotion looks out at the sceney of Ikebukuro. The lady standing next to the bookshelf loathingly says ‘beware of getting shot’, but Izaya completly ignores the curse and picked up something from his desk.

Izaya used this object like a volleyball and tossed it up into the air.

As it fell, he caught it and brought it toward the window.

“You should also remember, the atmoshere in this city.”

The man who came back to Ikebukuro, happily plays with Celty’s head in the palm of his hand –

Then, to the occupants in the room whom he considers his beloved friends, he smiles and says.

“Well then, to celebrate our good will…. how about we all have hot pot?”

出演

亀ヶ縛将人　紀田正臣　セルティ・ストゥルルソン　平和島静雄　羽島幽平
園原杏里　三ヶ島沙樹　岸谷新羅　田中トム　紫苑ルリ
ヴァローナ　竜兵当尋丸

製作

イラスト＆デザイン
ヤスダスズヒト


装丁
鎌部善彦

編集
鈴木Sue　和田敦

発行
株式会社アスキー・メディアワークス

発売
株式会社角川グループパブリッシング


原作　成田良悟

©2010 Ryohgo Narita